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THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD





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THE
SHADOW OF THE SWORD.

A Romance.

BY
ROBERT BUCHANAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

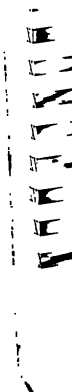


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THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD.



CHAPTER I.

IN THE STORMY NIGHT (*Continued*).

LOSE to the edge of the cliffs—
held down by ropes attached to
enormous stones—stood a huge
cage of iron, in which burnt a fire of bog
oak, bushes of furze, and dry sods of peat;
and surrounding it, as the flame leaped and
darted in the wild breath of the tempest,
were seven or eight men and two or three
old women. Some, running round and round
the cage, momentarily shut out the light from
the sea; others sat on the grass glaring

at the flame, their features horribly illuminated ; and one *groach*, or old woman, like a very Witch of Endor, was leaning forward over the flame and chattering wildly as she warmed her skinny hands.

Within a few yards of this group stood a low menhir, partly sheltering them from the torrents of rain ; and crawling up close in the shadow of this, Rohan listened and watched.

“ Bad luck to Penruach this night ! ” said a voice. “ It is too dark out there even to see our fire.”

“ That’s as St. Lok wills,” croaked the old woman. “ If he means to send us luck, the luck will come.”

Rohan shuddered. He knew his company now. The creatures on whom he gazed were fishers from Penruach, whose wrecking propensities even the severe laws passed after the Revolution had never been able to extinguish, and who regarded every passing ship as legitimate plunder. This St. Lok of theirs, by whom the old crone swore, had been a wrecker too ; for, if tradition was to be believed, he was an

antique Christian who spent his time in luring to destruction the ships of infidel invaders, and who was presently canonized for his pains!

Outside the point of vantage where this group gathered, stretched for miles one black neck of fatal reefs, partially covered and partially submerged. Dark as the night was, Rohan could see the flashing of foam-white breakers far out at sea; and wherever the horrible light from the cage fell in one long stream across the water, it shone only on the whiteness of broken foam or on black edges of rock.

Rohan hesitated. He knew and loathed the horrible work the creatures were about, but he was also cognizant of his own danger and wished to act with caution. His resolution was soon taken, and he acted upon it at once.

"Lok! Lok! send us a ship!" cried another woman, using the first line of an old distich. "St. Lok is deaf, it seems!" she added bitterly.

"Don't cry so loud, mother," cried a man.

"'Tis enough to waken the dead. Come, drink! Luck to St. Lok, and luck to the men of Penruach!"

A bottle was passed across to the woman, and she raised it to her lips. As she did so a wild shriek, startling and shrill, broke upon the night. All, men and women alike, leaped panic-stricken to their feet.

"See!" shrieked a man. "*An æl du! an æl du!*"* and he pointed at the menhir.

On the very top of the stone stood a gigantic figure waving its arms, with an unearthly scream. Its form seemed misshapen and bloody, its face glared horribly. Elevated so high, it seemed unspeakably terrible, and the boldest man there was panic-stricken.

"It is St. Lok himself!" shrieked one, flying past into the night.

"*An æl du! an æl du!*" said the others, stumbling, shrieking, flying, scattering themselves like foam into the darkness.

In a minute the place was deserted, and Rohan, with a wild laugh, leaped down.

* Breton name for the devil.

His stratagem had succeeded. By fixing his hands and feet in the fissures of the stone, he had slowly attained its summit, and emerged upon the awestruck sight of the wreckers. Not without some peril was this accomplished, for the sea was shrieking beneath his feet, and one false trick of the wind might have cast him over.

Springing down upon the cage, he seized it with all his strength, loosened it from its ropes and stones, and cast it over into the boiling sea. For one moment it illumined the waters, then it sank and disappeared.

The darkness that followed was so complete that Rohan, whose eyes were blinded by the light, could at first distinguish nothing; and overwhelmed by the fury of wind and rain, he cast himself upon the ground.

Rising presently, when his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, he silently pursued his way.



CHAPTER II.

THE PRAYERS OF TWO WOMEN.

THE drawing was over, the medical inspection had taken place, and the conscripts of Kromlaix knew their fate.

Gildas Derval passed the inspection with flying colours ; and being by this time fully plied with brandy and martial inspiration, he swaggered about like a very veteran.

Now, it so happened that the wish of his heart was granted, and Hoël was a conscript too. Hoël had drawn "twenty-seven," and as two of those who had drawn lower numbers turned out unfit for service, not

to speak of Rohan, who was *non est*, he was enrolled and passed among the fatal twenty-five. The Corporal was in his glory, the twins full of bravado, the mother disconsolate. In a few days they would receive their tickets, and have to march.

Meantime, the hue and cry had begun for the refractory "number one."

A body of *gendarmes* from St. Gurlott, headed by old Jacques Pipriac, were scouring the village day and night, while the conscripts were aiding them as far as lay in their power. All in vain. After the first attempt made to arrest him, Rohan was invisible.

"Malediction!" cried Pipriac to poor Mother Gwenfern one day, as for the fourth or fifth time they searched her cabin. "Could I but lay my hand on him, he should sweat for it. Thou hast him hidden—deny it not! Out with him! A thousand devils!"

And they prodded the mattresses with their bayonets, and turned out cupboards too small to conceal a dog, and looked everywhere into most unlikely places, while Mother Gwenfern, looking on, cried bitterly—

“ Ah, Sergeant Pipriac ! I never thought you could be so cruel to his father’s son ! ”

The Sergeant, a little one-eyed, hook-nosed martinet, very fond of the bottle, twirled his grey moustache and scowled. He had been a great friend of her husband, and his present conduct seemed ungrateful.

“ Malediction ! one must do one’s duty. Mother, thy son is a fool ; and were I not after him, there would be others far worse to do the job ! Come, let us have him, and I vow by the bones of St. Triffine that he shall be pardoned, and become a brave soldier of the Emperor.”

And while one of the *gendarmes* pushed his head up the chimney, and another held his nose over the black swinging-pot, as if expecting to find the fugitive there, the mother answered—

“ I have told you he is not here ! I do not know where he is ! Perhaps he has found a ship, and gone to England ! ”

“ *Tous les diables !* to England ! ”

“ Yes, Sergeant Pipriac.”

“ Bah ! that is not so easy, and he knows

better than to trust himself in a land of wild beasts. No, he is here. I know it—I smell it as a dog smells a rat. Malediction! that the son of my good comrade Raoul Gwenfern should turn out a coward.”

The widow’s pale cheek flushed.

“He is no coward, Sergeant Pipriac.”

“He will not fight. He creeps away and hides. He is afraid.”

“It is not that. My Rohan is afraid of nothing, but he will never become a soldier.”

The old fellow snapped his fingers.

“If I had him here, I would read him a lesson. Ah, if he would but take example by his two brave cousins, Hoël and Gildas. Those are men, if you like! each could strangle an ox! And their uncle, the Corporal, Mother Gwenfern — there’s a man!”

Turning to his file of *gendarmes*, he cried—

“Shoulder arms! march! the fox is not here!”

Then turning again at the door, as if still twitted by his conscience, he cried—

"Good day, mother! but, mind you, we shall come again; it is not our fault, but the Emperor's orders. Take my advice, and persuade him; in another day it will be too late. Now, then—march!"

They were gone, and the widow was left to her lonely reflections. She sat silent by the fire, thinking. She was a tall woman, with ashen grey complexion and grey hair, and long ago she had been told by a physician up in the town that her heart was diseased. She was the half-sister of Margarid Maure, who had married the fisherman Derval, brother of the Corporal; and being a very quiet, retiring woman, given to her own thoughts, she had seen very little of her sister or her children. People thought her unsociable and melancholy. Indeed, her whole heart was filled with her love for her only son.

When she told the Sergeant that she was ignorant of Rohan's whereabouts, she only spoke the truth. She had not seen her son for several days, and she was almost hoping that he had made good his escape to some

safer district. Poor woman, she little knew how thickly the country was covered with snares and traps for deserters, and how difficult it was to elude the vigilant eyes of the public officials.

From the beginning she had regretted Rohan's deliberate and terrible revolt. Everybody said it was cowardly. Even his own blood relations turned against him ; the whole village talked of him in no flattering way. Twenty times in a day the gossips brought her news which frightened her, and made her poor heart beat painfully, and her lips grow blue. No one thought Rohan could escape for long ; and when he was caught, he would be shot like a dog.

Far better, she thought, had he gone at once, and trusted to the good God for help. Many had gone and come home safe enough ; witness Uncle Ewen, who was covered with old wounds. Her heart was hard against the Emperor, but only as, in days of trouble, it had been hard against God. And the Emperor was like God—so great, so very far away !

She sat listening to the wind, which was rising that afternoon, and to the rain, which was beating against the door. Couched near to her, with its eyes closed in the sleepy light of the fire, was Jannedik, the she-goat, her son's favourite, and now her only companion.

It was a small room, rudely furnished with coarse oaken table and chairs. The floor was of earth, the black rafters stretched overhead. On the wall hung fishing and fowling nets, a fowler's pole and hook, etc. ; and pasted near the fireplace was a coloured print similar to the painting in Notre Dame de la Garde, representing shipwrecked sailors on a raft, kneeling all bareheaded, while a naked child, with a halo round his head, came walking to them on the sea.

The afternoon was very chilly and dreary, and where she sat she could hear the sea moaning as it does when stormy weather is coming.

Presently Jannedik rose, pricked up her ears, and listened. She had quick ears, had Jannedik, and would have been as good as a

watch-dog, if only she could have barked her warnings.

She was right; some one was coming. Presently the latch moved.

Mother Gwenfern did not turn round at first; she was too used to the neighbours coming in and out, and she thought it was one of them. But when Jannedik, as if quite satisfied, sank down again on the hearth, Mother Gwenfern moved on the form, and saw her niece Marcelle, taking off a large black cloak which was wet with rain.

They had only met once since that scene on the night of the drawing, and then Mother Gwenfern had been very angry and bitter. Seeing now who it was, she turned very pale, and her heart began to palpitate, as, with no greeting, she turned her eyes again upon the fire.

"It is I, Aunt Loïz!" said Marcelle softly. She was very pale.

There was no answer. The widow still felt her heart full of anger against the Dervals, and she was very indignant at seeing Marcelle.

"I could not bear to think of thee sitting here all alone, and though my uncle did not wish it, I have come over. Ah, God, thou art lonely ! It is dreadful when all the world is against one's own son."

The widow stirred in her chair, and said, still looking at the fire—

"It is still more dreadful when one's own blood relations hate us most. It was an ill day when my sister Margarid married a Derval, for you are all alike, though Ewen Derval is the worst. Some day, when you marry, you will know what it is to suffer like me, and you will pity me then."

Hanging her cloak against the wall, Marcelle came nearer and sat down upon the form by the widow's side. The widow shrank away a little, but said nothing. Marcelle, too, fixed her eyes upon the fire, and leant forward, warming her hands as she continued to speak.

"You are unjust to me, Aunt Loïz. I pity you now—ah, God, how I pity you ! Uncle Ewen pities you, too, and he is so vexed and dull that he hardly tastes a morsel. Our

house is nearly as sad as this, for Hoël and Gildas are both to go, and mother does nothing but cry."

It was a curious sight to see those two women—one so old and grey, the other so fresh and pretty—sitting on one form side by side, not looking in each other's faces, but both, whether speaking or listening, only looking at the fire. Jannedik seemed to have her own opinions on the subject, for she rose quietly and put her large head between Marcelle's knees.

There was a long silence, and the wind and the sea cried still louder outside. Finally the widow said, in the same low voice—

"Why have you come, child? What has brought you here at last?"

"Ah, Aunt Loïz, can you not guess? I came to ask after Rohan—whether he is still safe."

The answer was a short, hard, bitter laugh.

"So! Well, he is safe, if you desire to know. You may go back to those who sent you, and tell them that much from me. Yes!" she continued, her voice rapidly rising

in anger, "I know well what you come for, Marcelle Derval. You wish to find out where my poor boy is hidden, and then betray him to Ewen Derval and his enemies. You are a fool for your pains, and may God punish you for your wickedness, though your mother was of my blood!"

Marcelle was a high-spirited girl, and it is doubtful if she would have borne as much from any other woman in the world. Strange to say, she was now quite gentle, and only put her hand on her aunt's arm, saying—

"Don't! don't speak like that, for the love of God!"

Something in the tone startled the widow, and turning, she saw that Marcelle's eyes were blind with tears. She gazed in wonder, for Marcelle was not given to the melting mood.

"Marcelle, what do you mean? Why do you cry?"

The tone was sharp, but the look of the speaker's face was kinder. Marcelle rose, trembling.

"Never mind! You think I have no heart! Well, I will go, for you do not trust

me, and I have no right to vex you. But if you knew! if you knew!"

She turned as if to go; but the widow, reaching out her lean hand, restrained her.

"Marcelle, speak!"

Marcelle stood moveless, and, still trembling, looked into her aunt's face.

"Then Rohan has never spoken, Aunt Loïz? Well, I made him promise not to tell!"

"I do not understand!"

But the widow, from the new light on her niece's cheeks, was beginning to understand very well.

"I love Rohan, Aunt Loïz! I did not know it till lately, but now I love him dearly, and I cannot bear to hear you say such hard things of me,—for he has asked me to be his wife!"

The widow uttered an exclamation. The declaration did not surprise her so much in itself, for she had often had her suspicions, but it was startling as coming at that moment and under those circumstances. She looked keenly for a long time at Marcelle, who hung

her head, and went alternately red and pale. At last she said, in a more gentle tone than before—"Sit down, Marcelle!"

Marcelle again sat down by her side, comforted and strengthened in so far that her confession was over. Then came a longer silence than ever; for the widow was in her own mind going over the past, and wondering over many things, in a waking dream. Marcelle was beginning to think her angry, when she said, in a low voice, as if talking to herself—

"If you love him as you say, it is strange that you brought him no better luck!"

This was a home-thrust, for Marcelle had often thought the same herself.

"It is strange, as you say!" she cried. "Ah! it was terrible to me, for I had prayed to draw a lucky chance. Aunt Loïz, I did it for the best. He bade me draw; and he was not there; and if none of his kin had appeared for him, the black mark would have been put at once against his name. Uncle Ewen saved him that, for he spoke up and said he was ill. And now, Aunt Loïz,

if he would only go! Uncle Ewen has influence, and Rohan would be pardoned; excuses could be made; ah, if he would only give himself up at once! Hoël and Gildas are both going, and he would have company. We two would pray for him night and day while he was away, would we not, Aunt Loïz? Ah, if he would be wise!"

By this time the women were close together, holding each other's hands, and both were weeping. It was blessed, the widow now felt, to weep a little with one who loved her son, when all others were against him. But she cried, between her tears—

"No, it is impossible!"

"If I could only see him and speak to him! But he is so hard to understand. Ah, God! to hear every one, even the children, say our Rohan is afraid—it almost breaks my heart."

"He is not afraid, Marcelle!"

"That is what makes it all so strange. I know he is so brave, braver than all the rest; and yet, look you, he does not act like a man. When the Emperor calls for his children, he stays. When all the others take

their chance fairly, he keeps away. When his number is drawn, he hides—he who is so strong. What can I answer, when Gildas and Hoël say that he is afraid, and even Uncle Ewen cries shame upon his name?”

“He is so headstrong! and Master Arfoll has filled his head with strange notions.”

“You are right,” cried Marcelle, eagerly; “it is Master Arfoll that is to blame. Ah, he is a wicked man, that, and no friend to the good Emperor, or to God.”

Thus the two women conversed together, till the ice between them thawed, and they were quite reconciled. Mother Gwenfern had never doubted that Rohan was mad to resist the imperial authority, and much as her heart ached to think of parting with him, the dreadful uncertainty of his present fate was still more painful. About Master Arfoll, too, she was agreed, as we have seen. She could not understand that extraordinary being, and in her superstition she had often looked upon him with absolute dread. He was too clever to be a safe adviser for her son, and he never went to mass or confession, and men said he

had been guilty of strange deeds in his youth. Ah, if her poor Rohan had never met such a teacher! So thought she; and so thought the excited girl at her side.

So by-and-by it came to pass that Mother Gwenfern was holding Marcelle's little hand between her own trembling fingers, and softly smoothing it, with tender words.

"Thou art a good girl," she said, "and I could wish no better for my daughter, if that could be. It was not thy fault that Rohan spoke to thee in that way, instead of first speaking to me; men do foolish things for a girl, and Rohan is not wise—the good God help him! Oh, my son, my son!"

And she began again to weep bitterly, rocking herself to and fro, while Marcelle tried in vain to comfort her; nay, not wholly in vain, for there was solace in the touch of the soft young hands, in the sound of the gentle voice, in the very breathing and presence of one who loved her boy. The two hearts throbbed together, as hand clasped in hand the women wept together; and presently sinking down on their knees, while

Jannedik, the goat, blinked great brown eyes in astonishment, both women prayed that the man they loved might cease his mad purpose, might come in and yield to the inevitable decree, might trust himself in the hands of the good God, who would preserve him for them throughout the war.

By such prayer, by the prayer of those nearest and dearest to him, is a man often softly drawn away from an immortal purpose ; where power and strength might avail nothing, tears and a little love avail much, to shake the soul's sense of some pitiless duty. An infant's little hands may thus draw the just man from justice, the righteous man from righteousness ; for justice and righteousness are alike awful, while to stoop and kiss is sweet. When a man's house is armed in affection against him, when, instead of help and a sword, he finds on his own hearth only feebleness and a love that cannot understand, strong indeed must be his purpose, supreme indeed must be his faith, if he walks still onward and upward to the terrible heights of God.



CHAPTER III.

DOWN BY THE SHORE.

WHEN Marcelle emerged from the widow's cottage, her tears were all dry, and she walked swiftly through the rain in the direction of the village. The wind was still rising upon the sea, and the sea, although it was still calm, had that indescribable hollow concussion which is only to be heard previous to stormy weather. The fishermen were drawing their flat-bottomed boats up higher, and carrying their nets and ropes within doors for shelter, while a few strong old men, in their nightcaps and blue guernseys, were stolidly smoking in

the rain and nodding their heads out at the sea. The tide was three-quarters flowed, and all the fountains were long covered.

Instead of turning inland up the main street of the village, Marcelle kept her way along the wet shingle, until she had to thread her way among the *caloges*, or upturned boats converted into houses and stores, which clustered on the strand just above high-water mark. Most of these *caloges* had iron funnels to let out the smoke; and on their roofs, or keels, thick slimy grass was growing, and on more than one of the roofs goats were contentedly grazing. Many of the doors were closed, for the wind blew right into them; but on one or two thresholds men lounged, or women sat busy knitting, or picturesque children crawled. This was the lower village, exclusively devoted to the fishing population, and quite inferior in social status to the more solid village above.

Marcelle soon found what she was seeking,—a stone cabin built just above these amphibious dwellings, and newly thatched. Here, in the shelter of the doorway, a girl

sat in an old-fashioned armchair, busily teasing and carding wool, and singing to herself.

"Welcome, Marcelle!" she said, quietly using the usual Breton greeting.

"God be with you, Guineveve!" answered Marcelle, smiling; then, standing in the doorway and looking down at the busy fingers, she added, "How is Mother Goron?"

"You would say she was ten years younger," answered Guineveve. "She sings about the place at her work, and she will never rest, and she prays for the Emperor every night, because he has not taken Jàn away."

A faint colour came into the girl's cheeks as she spoke, but her face, seen in its tight snowy coif, was still very pale. As she sat there, in her dark dress with the white stomacher and sleeves, in her blue petticoat and stockings and leather shoes with buckles, you would have said, had you been a Kromlaix man, "That is the girl I could dance with from night till dawn of day."

She was not Kromlaix born, but was a native of Brest. When she was a child only

a year or two old her parents died, and Mother Goron, who was a distant relation, brought the little one back with her from Brest, where she had been on business concerning a pension she inherited from her husband, Jacques Goron, who had been a marine and had died in the lazaretto. From that day Mother Goron brought up Guineveve as her own child, with her only son Jàn.

"What news?" she said, looking up quickly, after a pause.

"None. Aunt Loïz does not know where he is. He has not been near home for many nights, and she is growing afraid."

"It is very strange."

"He is quite desperate and mad. I sometimes shudder, for he may have drowned himself in his rage. If I could only speak with him!"

They were talking, of course, of Rohan; but the personal pronoun was quite enough, as the girls were in each other's confidence, and understood one another.

"Gildas is to go?" said Guineveve presently.

"Yes; and Hoël."

"Even then, your mother has Alain and Jannick; and, then, there is Uncle Ewen. But it is terrible for the woman who has only one. If the Emperor had taken Jàn, mother would have died."

"But Aunt Loïz prays that *he* may go!"

"That is different. Ah, she has courage! If I had a son my heart would break."

"She is grieving, too," answered Marcelle. "It is the way of women. For my part, if I had a son and he was afraid, I should never love him any more. Think how terrible it would be if the good Emperor were served so by all his children, for whom he has done so much; he would be massacred, and then what would become of France? If Rohan were in his right senses he would not hide away."

"Perhaps he is afraid," sighed Guineveve. "Well, it is no wonder!"

Marcelle set her white teeth together, and trembled.

"If I thought it was *that*," she cried, "I should hate him for ever and ever; I should

then die of shame. What is a man if he has not a man's heart, Guineveve? He is no more than a fish in the sea, that flashes off if you move your hand. No, no, he is brave. But I will tell you what I think—Master Arfoll has put a charm upon him; he is bewitched!”

Marcelle did not speak figuratively; she literally and simply meant that the school-master had affected Rohan by some diabolical art.

“But Master Arfoll is a good man!” cried Guineveve.

“You may think that if you please, but I have my own thoughts. They say he was once a Priest, and now he is friends with no Priest but Father Rolland, who is friends with everybody. He knows cures for men and cattle, and they work like magic. I was told once up in St. Gurlott that he had the evil eye.”

Guineveve shuddered, for she too had her superstitions,—how, indeed, could she avoid them, reared as she had been in so lonely and uncultivated an atmosphere? So when

Marcelle crossed herself, she crossed herself too; but she looked up with a sad smile, saying—

“I do not believe that of Master Arfoll; and you must not say so to Mother Goron—he did her a great service long ago, and she thinks he is a saint, as pure as one of God’s angels. Ah yes, he has the face of a good man!”

Marcelle’s eyes flashed, and she was about to repeat, her charges even more angrily, when Jàn Goron walked hurriedly up to the door. He paused, surprised at seeing Marcelle there, and then turned smiling to Guineveve, whose face kindled at his coming.

“Welcome, Jàn!” said Marcelle.

Goron looked this way and that, as if fearing an eavesdropper; then said in a low voice, rapidly—

“I have news, Marcelle! He is not far away!”

Marcelle was about to utter a cry, when he placed his hand upon her arm.

“Hush! Come within, for the rain is heavy;” and when they were standing inside,

with a full view of poor old Mother Goron bustling busily before the fire, he added, "He was seen at Ploubol yesterday, and a man recognized him, and he was nearly taken. He struck down the *gendarmes*, and that will make his case worse. There is no escape; he must soon be caught. He was last seen going in the direction of Traonili."

Marcelle wrung her hands in despair.

"Ah, God, he is lost—he is mad!"

"Have you seen the proclamations?" asked Goron, in the same low voice. "Well, they are posted up along the road, and there is one on the church gate, and another on your own door. They forbid one to give shelter or succour to any deserter on pain of death; they say that every conscript who has not answered to his name will be shot like a dog; there is to be no mercy,—it is too late."

Goron was deeply moved, for he was the one man in Kromlaix of whom Rohan had ever made a friend. In his character and his whole bearing there was a nobility akin to that of Rohan himself. And who that saw the quiet light in his eyes as he looked at

Guineveve could doubt that he too loved and was loved in return ?

When Goron mentioned the proclamations against deserters, Marcelle's heart went sick.

He had not told her, however, of the sight he had seen with his own eyes—old Corporal Derval himself, pipe in mouth, accompanied by the *gendarme* Pipriac and followed by Hoël and Gildas, strutting forth and sticking up with his own hands the paper that was now to be seen on his own door !

Marcelle was not one of those maidens who wear their hearts on their sleeves : she had martial blood in her veins, and was quite capable, literally and figuratively, of "standing fire." But this gnawing terror overpowered her, and she felt faint. All the memory of that happy day in the Cathedral of St. Gildas swam before her ; she felt the embracing arms, the loving kiss ; and then she seemed again to behold her lover as he had appeared on the night of the Conscription, wild-eyed, vehement, blaspheming all she held holy and sublime. It was curious, as illustrating the tenacity of her character, that

she still stubbornly and firmly refused to believe that Rohan, in his extraordinary conduct, was actuated by the ordinary motives of cowardice and fear. She chose rather to think him the victim of some malignant fate, some diabolic spell such as "wise men" like Master Arfoll knew how to weave, than to dream that he acted under emotions which, in her simple idea, could be only both treasonable and base. True, she remembered with a shiver his old expressions concerning the Emperor; but these, she always persuaded herself, were uttered when he was not in his "right mind."

She did not speak now, but, leaning her forehead against the door, gazed drearily out into the rain. All the beautiful dream of her young love seemed blurred and blotted out by mist and tears.

"Marcelle," whispered Guineveve, taking her hand softly, "do not grieve; all will be well yet!"

There was no answer, but a heavy sigh, and the pale firm face wore an expression of despairing pain.

"After all," said Goron, sympathetically, "he may be pardoned, for the Emperor wants men. If he would only come in—even now!"

Marcelle was still silent, and presently she kissed Guineveve on either cheek, and held out her hands to Goron.

"I must go now," she said quietly. "Mother will wonder where I am."

Slowly, under the rain that was ever falling heavier and heavier, she moved through the streets of the village. She saw nothing, heard nothing—she was wrapt in a dream; though to look upon her as she passed, with her firm lips and her quiet eyes, with her cloak wrapped round her, and her foot as firm yet light upon the ground as ever, one would scarcely have thought that she had any care.

Yet the great Sea was rising and crying behind her as she went, and before her soul a storm was spreading, more terrible than any sea.



CHAPTER IV.

“THE POOL OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

A FEW days after the medical inspection of the conscripts, the order to march arrived. They were to go from home to Traonili, from Traonili to Nantes, and thence, after having joined their regiments, right on to the Rhine !

The experiences of the previous year had not brought the Emperor wisdom, and his struggle with Destiny was about to commence on a more enormous scale than ever. The loss of 500,000 men, with all their arms, ammunition, and artillery, had not daunted or even discouraged him ; for he had merely uplifted his finger, and legions had come

to take their place. Meantime, Prussia and Russia had shaken hands, and the Tugendbund had been formed, and all Germany had risen. On the 16th of March previous to the Conscription, Prussia had declared war ; and now the patriotism of the Teuton youth was bursting forth like a volcano. At the head of this host stood the bigot Blucher, pupil of the great Friedrich. As if this were not enough, Sweden too had joined the confederacy against Bonaparte. And already the French had evacuated Berlin, and retreated on the Elbe.

Our story at present, however, concerns not the movements of great armies, but the fortunes of humble individuals. The summons to march had come, and the Derval household was as busy as it was troubled. At last came the eve of the departure, and the conscripts were to set forth, all together, at earliest dawn.

There was a busy gathering that night in the Corporal's kitchen. Sergeant Pipriac was there, with his little eyes red with brandy ; Mikel Grallon and several other

friends of the twins had gathered to drink a parting glass. The mother was busy upstairs, turning over and fondling for the last time, and packing up in bundles, her sons' clothes, and weeping bitterly, while Marcelle tried in vain to comfort her. In many houses that night there was such weeping.

The twins sat moodily enough, depressed at heart now the time had indeed come. Even Uncle Ewen was out of spirits; for, after all, he knew the terrible odds of war, and he was very fond of his nephews.

"One thing you will escape, *mes garz*," he said, puffing his pipe quietly, "and that is, all the hard words of the drill sergeant. You are soldiers ready made! 'Eyes right,' 'eyes left,' 'first position,' 'second position,' 'present arms'—bah! you know all that by heart, for you were bred in a soldier's house. They will be pleased with you for this, and you will get on, you will thrive. There is another thing you must know. When you are receiving cavalry, don't dig into your man in the old way—like this!—but turn your elbow and give a twist of the wrist—

like that!"—here the old burnpowder illustrated the action with his stick. "That is the trick of it, and you will soon learn."

"I suppose so," said Gildas gloomily. "The Russians and the Prussians can play at that trick too!"

"When you have once smelt powder, it will be all right," returned their uncle; "and the best of it is, you will do that at once. There will be no delay, no worry—you are going straight to the Rhine—straight into the midst of the fun."

"I wish I was going too!" sighed Alain; "it is like my luck."

"Come, come," cried Hoël, "thou wast pale as death that day of the drawing, and would have given thy right arm not to go."

"I did not know then that you two were going."

"Thy turn will come," said the Corporal; "and thine too, Jannick. I will give you another wrinkle, youngsters!" he continued, turning again to the others. "Make friends with the corporal, and with the sergeant too, if you can; a glass of brandy goes a long

way, and few of them will refuse. Don't waste your money on the sutler women, by treating all your comrades, like mad conscripts ; but treat the corporal if he is willing, and, look you, you will have a friend in need. Don't be frightened at first by his gruff ways—address him with humility, and he will be satisfied ; treat him, and he will be pleased."

"All right, Uncle Ewen," returned Gildas, holding up a glass of brandy. "Here's his health, whoever he is!"

"I myself have seen to your shoes, *mes garz*," continued the Corporal. "Two pairs each, but neither new—soft as silk to the feet, and the best leather. I have known many a conscript go lame before he reached Nantes by starting in new shoes. Then there's your knapsacks ! You will find them irksome at first, but the true trick is to strap them tight into the small of the back, not to let them hang loose as foolish conscripts do."

Uncle Ewen gave his instructions very quietly ; for the life of him, he could not help feeling dull. The company was all very quiet, and the younger men seemed to regard the

two twins as lambs in fair prospect of being slaughtered. Mikel Grallon was the only one that laughed. Boisterously, again and again, he clapped the twins on the back, and offered his hand, and clinked glasses with them. But drink had no effect that night in lighting up their hearts. They knew their mother was in tears upstairs, and that Marcelle was grieving too. They saw plainly enough that Uncle Ewen's talk was forced, and that even Sergeant Pipriac was sorry for them in his rough way. They were going to "glory" for the first time, and they would a great deal rather have stayed at home.

Late that evening, while the company in the kitchen were drinking, smoking, and talking, Marcelle quietly left the house and walked up the road which led out of the village.

The moon was at the full, but vast clouds driven by a high wind obscured its rays, and the night was very dark. Showers of rain fell from time to time, and between the

showers the moon looked out at times with a wan wistful face.

Running rather than walking, with nothing but her ordinary indoor costume to shield her from the showers, Marcelle rapidly made her way up the hill, passed the church with its churchyard and calvary (in passing which she crossed herself eagerly), and then, some hundred yards further, turned out of the road across an open heath. She was by this time breathless with speed, and her eyes looked from side to side timidly, as she pursued her way through the darkness. The path was obviously familiar to her, and, though she tripped several times, she never lost her way. Once, indeed, she stopped perplexed; but just then the moon looked out in its fullest brilliance, and she ran on again in the right direction.

By this time she had left the village a mile and a half behind. She was in the midst of a lonely heath thickly strewn with grey granite stones, with here and there little clusters of dwarf fir trees and wild furze.

Another shower came, blotting out the

light of the moon, and the wind moaned very desolately. Still, with quickly palpitating heart, Marcelle crept on. When the moonlight appeared again in full brightness, she had found what she sought.

Towering above in the moon's rays was a colossal granite Cross, looking up to which she could see the body of the Christ, drooping the head and gazing into the gloom. Clustering all below it were wild shrubs, monstrous weeds, darnel and nettle and foxglove as high as a man's breast.

Marcelle trembled as she looked up, crossing herself rapidly. Then creeping forward to the base of the Cross, she found a basin of blood-red granite, cracked across, but still capable of holding the rain and dew. It was brimful from the recent showers, and its contents resembled blood.

Now, this solitary basin, called in the dialect of the country the "Pool of the Blood of Christ," was very holy in the eyes of the villagers—more holy even than the wells for holy water in the church itself; for surely as the dews of Heaven fell into that basin they

possessed the property of Christ's own blood, and could heal sickness where the sick one had much faith. That was not all. It was a common superstition that if a man or woman went thither when the moon was full, and dipped into the basin any portion of any article of attire or of anything to be worn about the body, that portion of inert matter would become "blessed," and have the power of warding off danger and even death from the wearer. Only one condition was attached to this blessing—that the "dipping" must be done in complete solitude and be kept a secret from all other living beings.

Creeping forward, and kneeling on her knees, despite the rank weeds that clustered round her, Marcelle said a short prayer; then, drawing from her breast two medals, she passed both into her right hand, and dropped them softly into the granite basin. Trembling with awe, she closed her eyes and repeated a prayer for the occasion, mentioning as she did so the names of Hoël and Gildas.

When she had finished she again slipped in her white hand and drew the medals forth.

"Christ be with me!" she said in Breton thrusting them eagerly into her bosom.

The medals were of copper, and each as large as a crown-piece. They had been given to her long ago by the Corporal, and she had religiously preserved them; but now, when the twins were going away, she meant to give them one each, without explaining, of course, that they possessed a special "charm." They were handsome perforated medals, and, attached to a string, could be hung unseen over the heart. On one side of each was the laurelled image of the Emperor; on the other, the glimpse of a bloody battle, with the inscription—"AUSTERLITZ."

Her excitement had been great, and directly her task was over she turned away. Suddenly, ere she had gone many yards, she heard a sound of footsteps behind her.

She turned again sharply, but the darkness was great and she saw nothing. Crossing herself again, she began to run.

That moment she again heard the footsteps behind her.

She stopped in terror and looked back.

The moon gleamed out for an instant, and she could distinctly perceive a figure, earthly or unearthly, following close at her back.

A less courageous girl, under the tension of such emotions as Marcelle had felt that night, would have fainted; indeed, there was not another woman, and scarcely a man, in Kromlaix who would have ventured alone at such an hour, as she had done, to the "Pool of the Blood of Christ." Marcelle was terror-stricken, but she still retained her senses. Seeing the figure approaching, she fled again.

But the figure was as fleet as she, and she heard its footsteps coming behind her, nearer and nearer; she ran and ran till her breath failed; the feet came nearer and nearer, and she could hear a heavy breathing behind her back.

With a tremendous effort she turned, determined to face her ghostly pursuer. Close to her, with his face gleaming white in the moon, was a man, and before she could see him clearly he spoke—he in a low voice uttered her name.

"Marcelle!"

She knew the voice instantly as that of her lover; yet, strange to say, though she had longed and prayed for this meeting, she shrank away, and made no answer. The moon came out brightly and illumined his figure from head to foot. Head and feet were bare, his form looked strange and distorted, the hair fell in wild masses about his face. He loomed before her like a tall phantom, and his voice sounded hollow and strange.

"Marcelle!—have you forgotten me? Yes, it is I;—and you are afraid!"

"I am not afraid," answered Marcelle, recovering herself; "but you startled me—I thought it was a ghost."

"I was resting yonder, and I saw you come to the 'Pool of the Blood of Christ!'"

Marcelle's reply was characteristic.

"You saw me! Then you have broken my charm."

"Not at all," answered Rohan, very coldly. "I do not know your errand, and I could not see you when you knelt. It is a cold night

for you to be abroad. There, you shiver—hasten home.”

He spoke as if there was nothing between them, as if he were any stranger advising another ; his voice rang cold and clear. She answered in the same tone.

“Hoël and Gildas are going to the wars to-morrow, and that is what brought me here. They will wonder why I stay so long.”

She made a movement as if to go. He did not stir a step to follow her. She turned her face again.

“It is strange to see you here ; I thought you were far away. They are looking for you down there.”

Rohan nodded. “I know it.”

“There is a watch upon your mother’s house day and night, and upon ours too. There are *gendarmes* from St. Gurlott in the village, with Pipriac at their head. There is a paper posted up on the houses, and your name is upon it ; and there is a reward.”

“I know that also.”

Still so cold and calm. He stood motionless, looking upon her as if upon the tomb

of a lost love. She could not bear it any longer. Casting away her mad pretence of indifference, she sprang forward and threw her arms around his neck.

"Rohan! Rohan! why do you speak to me like that?"

He did not resist her, but softly disengaged her arms, as she continued—

"We did not know what had happened—I have been heart-broken—Gildas and Hoël are going. They are mad against thee, all of them. It is terrible!"

"But *thou*!"

The endearing second personal pronoun was in requisition at last.

"And I—my Rohan, I have always been on thy side. They said thou wast afraid, but I told them they spoke falsely. They are all angry with me for defending thee. Kiss me, my Rohan! Wilt thou not kiss me?"—and after his cold lips came down and were quite close to hers, she cried, "Ah, my Rohan, I *knew* thou wouldst be wise. It is not too late, and thou wilt be forgiven if thou but march with the rest. Come down, come

down! Ah, thank God that it is so! Uncle Ewen will intercede, and Gildas and Hoël will shake hands; it will be all well!"

She looked up in his face with passionate confidence and hope, and as she finished, kissed him again with her warm ripe lips. With those white arms around his neck, with that fond bosom heaving against his own, he stood aghast.

"Marcelle, Marcelle!" he cried in a heart-broken voice.

"My Rohan!"

"Do you not understand *yet*? My God, will you not understand? It is not that—it is not that I have changed my mind. I cannot come down; I will never give myself up, alive!"

There were no warm arms around him now. Marcelle had drawn back amazed.

"Why, then, have you come back to Kromlaix?"

"To see *thee*! To speak to thee once more, whether I live or die!"

Trembling and crying, Marcelle took both his hands in hers. His were icy cold.

"Thou wilt come down! For my sake, for thy Marcelle! Ah, do not break my heart—do not let me hear them call thee coward. And if not for my sake, for thine own. Thou canst not escape them; they will be after thee day and night; thou wilt die. Mother of God, Son of God!—yes, die! My Rohan, the Emperor will be good to thee—come down!"

"And go to the war?"

"What then? Thou wilt come back like Uncle Ewen; all will look up to thee, and know thee for a brave man."

"And thou?"

"Wilt be thy wife, my Rohan! I swear it, dear. I will love thee, I will love thee."

"But if I die?"

"Then I will love thee more, and I will wear crape upon my arm till I am old, and I will never wed another man. Thou wilt have died, my brave soldier, fighting for the Emperor. Thou wilt wait for me in Heaven, and I shall come to thee and kiss thee there."

There was passion enough in her voice, in her words, and in her kiss, to have swept

away like a torrent any common man's resolve. Her tones, her looks, her living frame, all spoke, all were eloquent in Love's name, as she clung around him and drew him on. He shook before her impetuous appeal; his heart rose, his head swam, and his eyes looked wildly up to the cloudy moonlit heaven; but he was firm.

"Marcelle, it is impossible. I cannot go!"

"Rohan, Rohan!"

He tottered as if overpowered, and held his hand upon his heart. His whole frame trembled; he seemed no longer a strong man, but a shivering, affrighted creature. Before he knew it he had sunk upon his knees.

"I cannot go—it is an oath. Farewell!"

She looked at him fixedly, as if to read his very soul. A terrible thought had flashed upon her.

"Rohan, speak! for God's sake, stand up and speak! Is it true what they say—that you are *afraid*?"

He rose to his feet and looked at her strangely.

"Speak, Rohan!"

"Yes, it is true."

"That you are afraid! That you are a——"

"It is all true," he answered. Had it been day she might have seen a strange smile on his tortured face. "I will not serve the Emperor, I will not go to war, because—well, because I am afraid."

He did not explain his fear, for, had he done so, she could not have comprehended. He continued—

"It is best that you should understand at once, for ever, that I will never fight as soldiers fight; that is against my heart; and that I am all, perhaps, that you say. Were it otherwise, Marcelle, I think your love might tempt me; but I have not the courage to do what you bid me. There, you are shivering—it is so cold. Hasten home!"

Her heart seemed broken now. Not in anger, not in wrath, did she turn upon him; she stabbed him with the crueller pain of tears. In those regions, where physical daring is a man's mightiest dower, a coward

is baser than a worm, fouller than a leper of the old times. And she had loved a coward!

Had she been wiser in the world, she might have guessed that he who brands himself with an ill name is not always the fittest to bear it. But she was not wise, and his own confession, corroborating the assertion of her kinsmen, appalled her.

Almost unconsciously, still in tears, she was creeping away.

"Marcelle, will you not give me your hand again? Will you not say good-bye?"

She paused, but said nothing. He seized her hands, and kissed her softly on either cheek.

"Farewell, Marcelle! Thou canst not understand, and I do not blame thee; but if evil comes to me, do not think of me in anger. Perhaps God may be good, and some day you may think better of me. Farewell, farewell!"

He had turned away sobbing, when she caught him by the arm, crying passionately—

"They will find thee; they will kill thee—

that will be worse! Where art thou going?
Where wilt thou fly?"

"God will help me to find a refuge, and
I do not think they will find me. Keep me
in thy heart!"

Then he was gone indeed.

An hour after that strange meeting Marcelle was back in the cottage trying to comfort her mother. It was midnight when Hoël and Gildas got into bed and fell into heavy sleep. They were to rise before dawn. The Corporal sat by the kitchen fire, pipe in mouth. He was to sit up till the hour for summoning his nephews, and then afterwards to see them a short distance upon the road.

Meantime Rohan Gwenfern was wandering through the darkness like a dreary spirit of the night. Shaken to the soul by that last interview with her he held dearest in all the world, yet as resolved as ever in his despairing resistance against an evil fate in which she seemed arrayed against him, he flitted to and fro, he scarce knew whither.

The passionate love in his heart fought

fiercely against the cold ideal in his soul. He could feel Marcelle's embraces still; for kisses less sweet, he knew, many a man would have given his salvation.

He had not slept for two nights and days, during which he had been creeping back to Kromlaix. The rain was still falling, and with every shower the night seemed to grow darker. Sick and wearied out, he crept back to the CROSS, and there, resting his head against the stone, partially sheltered from the rain by the stone figure above, and entirely hidden by the weeds and furze which rose above his head, he fell into a heavy sleep.

And as he slept he dreamed a dream.





CHAPTER V.

THE DREAM.

HE seemed, in his dream, to be still lying on the spot where he had fallen asleep, with his eyes fixed on the crucified figure above him. All was very dark around and over him ; the wind moaned, and the rain still fell heavily on the ground and plashed drearily into the granite pool. He lay crouching among the wet weeds and grasses, watching and listening in fascination for he knew not what.

His heart was beating madly, every pulse in his frame was thrilling ; for he had been startled by a strange movement above him, by a supernatural sound.

He listened more intently, and this time

his ears were startled by a low moan as of a human mouth. It came again ;—and behold, to his horror and terror, the figure on the Cross was moving its head from side to side. Not as if in pain, not as if wholly in consciousness, but as a sleeper moves his head, slowly awakening from a heavy sleep.

The heart of Rohan failed within him, a sense as of death stole over him. He would have fled, but his limbs refused to obey his will. He sought to utter a cry, but the sound was frozen in his throat. For a moment, as it seemed, he became unconscious. When he looked again, the Cross above was empty, and the figure was standing at the foot !

The rain ceased, the wind grew low, and through parting clouds the moon looked down. Black against the moonlight loomed the Cross ; while at its foot, glimmering like marble, stood the Christ.

His eyes were open now, gazing straight down at the crouching form of Rohan ; and his arms and limbs moved, and from his lips there came a breath ; and he said in a low voice, “ Rise ! ”

The fascinated body of Rohan obeyed that diviner will, and rose at once and stood erect; and at that moment Rohan felt all his fear fall from him, and he gazed up into the Face, but spoke no word. And the Face stilled the troubled waters of his heart with its beauty, as moonlight stills the sea. He would fain have fallen again and worshipped, not in terror now, but in joy.

Then the Christ said, "Follow me!"

As a spirit moves, scarce touching the earth, he descended from the foot of the Cross, and moved silently along. As a man follows a ghost, fearful to lose the vision, yet afraid to approach too near, Rohan followed.

The night was black, but a dim light ran before them on the ground. Silently they passed along, and swiftly; for it seemed to Rohan, in his dream, that he moved with no volition of his own, but as if upborne by invisible hands that helped him on; and the woods and fields seemed moving by, like clouds drifting before the wind, and the earth beneath their feet swept past them like a wind-blown sea.

Now conscious, now unconscious, as it seemed, Rohan followed; for at times his senses seemed flown and his eyes closed; but ever on opening his eyes he saw the white Christ gliding on before him, pausing ever and anon to gaze round, with the pallid moonlight on His face, and with eyes divine to beckon him on.

Time trembles into eternity during sleep—there is no count of mundane minutes; and Rohan, in his dream, seemed to follow his Guide for hours and hours and hours. Through the hearts of lonely woods, over the summits of moonlit hills, past spectral rivers gleaming in the moon, by solitary waters hushed as death, through villages asleep in the green hollows. Wheresoever they went all slumbered; the eyes of all the Earth were sealed.

Then they passed through the darkened streets of towns, creeping along in the house-shadows till they emerged again upon the open moonlit plains.

At last, passing through the wide paths of a

cultivated wood, and crossing an open space where fountains were leaping, the Figure paused before a great building with windows of glass gleaming in the moon. All around it the greensward stretched, and flowers sprang, and fountains leaped, but it stood very cold and still.

The Figure passed on and stood before the door, uplifting his hand. The door opened and he entered in, and Rohan followed close behind.

The corridors were dark as death, but the strange shining light that ran before the Spirit's feet made all things visible within. They passed through many rooms—some vast and dim, tenanted only by the solitary moon-ray; others dark and curtained, full of the low breathing of men or women in sleep—along silent passages where the wind wailed low at their coming; up ghostly stairs with faces of antique painting glimmering from the walls, and marble busts and statues gleaming through the dusk. Nothing stirred, nothing woke; sleep like moonlight breathed everywhere, trembling amid darkness. And though

their feet fell on hollow corridors and empty floors, their passing awoke no reverberation ; but the doors flew open silently, and the sleepers did not stir on their pillows ; and the only sound was the low cry of the winds in the silent courts.

Again the dream faded, and Rohan's consciousness seemed to die away. When the eyes of his soul opened again, he was crouching in the shadow of a curtained door, and standing erect close to him, drawing back the curtains with a white hand, stood the Christ, pointing.

Before them, with his back to them, writing busily at a table, sat a Man. The room in which he wrote was an antechamber, and through the open door of the inner room could be seen a heavily curtained bed. On the table stood a lamp, casting down the rays upon the papers before him, and leaving all the rest of the chamber dim.

It seemed as if all Rohan's heart hungered to see the face of this Man ; but it remained hidden, bent over the table. Hours seemed to pass ; he did not stir.

He was partly undressed for sleep, but though all the world rested, he still wrote and worked. Rohan's soul sickened. It seemed terrible to behold that one Form awake and alone, while all the heart of creation seemed hushed and still.

Again the dream faded. When Rohan looked again, the room was empty ; but the lamp still burnt on the table, though the shape of the Man was gone.

He turned his eyes upward and met the divine eyes of his Guide, who pointed to the table and formed with His lips, rather than uttered with His breath, this one word, "Read!"

He crossed the chamber, he bent above the table. It was covered with papers written in a clear hand, but his eyes saw one paper only, on which the ink was scarcely dry, and it contained only two words, his own name—"ROHAN GWENFERN."

As he read, in his dream, he felt the confused sick horror of a man half stunned. He seemed to understand darkly that his name so

written meant something fatal and dreadful, yet he could not sufficiently grasp the sense of how or why : all he seemed to know was the awfulness of this one Man, awake when all creation slept, writing that name down as if for doom ; yet for what doom Rohan knew not, any more than he knew the likeness of the Man. Nevertheless, horror possessed him, and he fell on his knees, uplooking in the face of his Guide, and dumbly entreating help from some calamity he could not understand. But during a sudden flash of consciousness the Christ had passed into the inner chamber, and had drawn back the heavy curtain of the bed therein ; and lo ! Rohan saw clearly, as if in moonlight, the face of the Man, though it was now calm in sleep. He crept forward, hungering on the face ; and he knew it. White as marble, with closed cold lids and lips still firm in rest ; a stony face—such as he had often pictured it waking, such as he had seen on coins and medals of metal, and in rude pictures hung on cottage walls ;—the face of the great Emperor.

And the Emperor slept so soundly, that not even his breathing could be heard in the chamber ; for as Rohan crept closer, with fascinated eyes, the lineaments of the face grew more fixed in their marble pallor, so that Rohan thought in his dream, "He does not sleep, but is dead." And one hand on the coverlet looked like marble too : a white hand like a woman's, a small hand clenched like a sleeping child's.

In that moment of wonder he turned his eyes, and found himself alone.

The figure of the Christ had disappeared. The lamp still burnt in the outer chamber, but more dimly. He was alone by the bed of the great Emperor, watching, and shivering from head to foot.

Strangely enough, the supernatural presence had been a source of strength. No sooner had it disappeared than an awful sense of terror and helplessness possessed him, and he would have flown ; but he could not fly—he could not turn his eyes away. To be there alone with the terrible Master of his life—to be crouching there and seeing the Emperor

lying as if dead—was too much for his soul to bear; he struggled and struggled in despair and dread, and at last, in the agony of his dream, he uttered a wild cry. The Emperor did not stir, but in a moment the cry was answered from distant rooms—there was a sound of voices, a tramp of feet, a rushing to and fro; he tried again to fly, but was still helpless, as the feet came nearer and nearer; and while the doors of the ante-chamber were burst open, and a haggard light of cruel faces came in, and soldiers rushed in upon him with flashing swords to take his life, he swooned away—and woke.

* * * * *

He was lying where he had cast himself down, among the great weeds at the Cross's foot; the dawn was just breaking, and the air was very cold, and the stone Christ hung above him, drooping its heavy head, wet with the long night's rain.

He was about to rise to his feet and crawl away to some securer shelter, when a round of voices broke upon his ears, and a tramp of coming feet. Then he remem-

bered how near he was to the highway, and casting himself flat down among the weeds, he lay hidden and still.

The feet came nearer; the voices were singing a familiar song :

“ Le matin quand je m’éveille,
Je vois mon Empereur,—
Il est doux à merveille ! ”

Rohan shivered as he lay hidden, for he distinctly recognized the voices of Hoël and Gildas Derval. There was a pause on the road, a sudden silence ; then another voice, in the unmistakable tones of the old Corporal, cried, “ Forward ! ”

The tramp of feet began again, the voices renewed their singing. All passed close by the Cross, but down in the hollow of the road. Rohan did not stir till every sound of foot or voice had died. The conscripts of Kromlaix, escorted out of the village by many of their friends and fellow villagers, were on their way by dawn to join the armies of the Emperor on the banks of the far-off Rhine.



CHAPTER VI.

MIKEL GRALLON.

FROM that day forth, for many days and weeks, the fate of Rohan Gwenfern remained unknown. Search was made for him high and low, his name was proclaimed through every village for many miles around, blood-money was offered for his apprehension alive or dead—but all without avail. The last occasion on which he had been publicly seen was on that memorable night of the Conscription, when he made his appeal to Father Rolland—whose opinion, by the way, was emphatically to the effect that Rohan had committed suicide. Only one person perhaps knew

better, and that was Marcelle Derval. Not one word did she breathe, however, of the meeting under the Cross on the night before the departure of the conscripts.

On this subject of Rohan the Corporal was adamant, and he lost no opportunity of uttering his denunciations. Marcelle no longer protested, for she felt that all was over, since Rohan was either mad or worse than mad; and when Uncle Ewen averred that, while all the other conscripts of Kromlaix were good men and true, Rohan Gwenfern was a wretch and a coward, she could not utter one word in answer—for had not Rohan confessed with his own lips that he was afraid, and had she not seen in his face with her own eyes the sick horror a physical coward must feel?

It was terrible to think of—it was worse even than death itself! Her passion had fed itself upon his glorious manhood, on his mighty physical strength and beauty, on the power and dignity of his nature, and even on his prowess in games of skill and courage; she had exulted in him and gloried in him

as even feeble women exult and glory in what is strong; and *now!* It was almost inconceivable to think that he was of despicable fibre even as compared with Hoël, who she knew was timid, and Gildas, who she confessed to herself was stupid. All that leonine look had meant nothing, after all! Even a cripple on a crutch, if beckoned by the Emperor, would have behaved more nobly. Better, she thought, a thousand times better, that Rohan had fallen from the dizzyest crag of Kromlaix, and been mourned as a true man, and remembered by all the youth of these shores as "over brave."

Yet frequently, as these thoughts passed through her fiery brain, Marcelle felt her own conscience pleading against her; for never until that last meeting had she felt so strongly the distance of Rohan's soul from her own, and never since had she failed to say to herself at times, "Perhaps I do not understand." Something in the looks, the words, made her feel, as she had often felt before, the influence of a strong moral nature asserting itself steadfastly and fearlessly, yet

most lovingly, against her prejudice and her ignorance. And this feeling awoke fear and re-created love, for it re-clothed Rohan in the strength that women seek.

She could better bear to think him wicked and mad—to look upon him as a fierce enemy of her convictions, and of the great Imperial cause—than to conceive him a coward pure and simple. If the sure conviction of *that* had lasted for one whole day, we verily believe that Marcelle's love would have turned to repulsion, that her hand would almost have been ready to strike her lover down.

Well, coward or *chouan*, or both, he had disappeared, and if he lived, which many doubted, no man knew where he was hiding. The nose of Sergeant Pipriac, reddened with brandy but keen as an old hound's, could find no scent of the fox in or out of the village. A hundred spies were ready to claim the reward, but no opportunity came. At last the *cure's* private suspicions spread into general certainty, and it was everywhere averred that Rohan Gwenfern had made away with himself, either by leaping from

one of the high cliffs, or by drowning himself in the sea. As weeks passed by and no traces of the fugitive were found, even Marcelle began to fear the worst, and her silent reproaches died away in a nameless dread.

But she had her mother to comfort—the work of the house to do—the Fountain to visit—and none of her hours were idle. Had she been able to sit like a lady of romance, with her hands folded before her and her eyes fixed in a dream, her woe would have consumed her utterly; but, as it was, she was saved by work. Never too sadly introspective, she now looked out upon her pain like a courageous creature. Though her cheek was pale and her eye often dim, her step upon the ground was firm as ever. Her heart and lips were silent of their grief. Only when she stole down to Mother Gwenfern to whisper of Rohan, or when she placed her poor weeping head in the lap of Guineveve, did the trouble of her soul find relief.

An irritating but salutary distraction came at this period in the conduct of Mikel Grallon.

Grallon, whom she had more than once suspected of an attachment for herself, began now to show unmistakable indications of a settled design. True, all he did was to drop in of a night and smoke with the Corporal, to bring little presents of fresh fish to the widow, and to listen humbly hour after hour to the Corporal's stories ; but Marcelle, well skilled in the sociology of Kromlaix, knew well that such conduct meant mischief, or in other words, matrimony. It was not etiquette in Kromlaix for a bachelor to address himself directly to the maiden of his selection ; *that* was the last stage of courtship, the preliminaries consisting of civilities to the elders of the house, a very prosaic account of his own worldly possessions, and a close inquiry into the amount of the bride's dower. Now, Grallon was a flourishing man, belonging to a flourishing family. He was the captain of a boat of his own, and he reaped the harvest of the sea with no common skill. His morals were unexceptionable, though morals of course were a minor matter, and he was in all other respects an eligible match.

He was not a pleasant person, however, this Mikel Grallon. His thin tight lips, his small keen eyes, his narrow forehead and eyebrows closely set together, indicated a peculiar and acquisitive character; his head, set on broad shoulders, was too small for symmetry; and though his bright weather-beaten cheek betokened health and strength, he lacked the open expression of less sophisticated fishermen. His features, indeed, resembled folded leaves rather than an open flower; for the wind, which blows into open bloom the faces of so many men who sail the sea, had only shut these lineaments tighter together, so that no look whatever of the hidden soul shone directly out of them. He went about with a smile—the smile of secrecy, and of satisfaction that his secrets were so well kept.

The great characteristic of the man was his silent pertinacity. In whatever he did, he spared no pains to insure success; and when he had set his heart upon an object, the peregrine in its pursuit was not more steady.

And so, when he began to "woo," Marcelle at once took the alarm; and although his "wooing" consisted only of a visit two or three nights a week, during which he scarcely exchanged a word with herself, she knew well what his visits portended. Every evening, when he dropped in, she tried to make some excuse for leaving the house, and when she was constrained to stay she moved about in feverish *malaise*; for the man's two steadfast eyes watched her with a dumb fascination, and with an admiration there was no mistaking.

Jannick, who saw how matters stood, found a good butt for his jests in Grallon, and was not altogether to be subdued even by gifts of new ribbons for the *binion*. He loved to tease Marcelle on the subject of the fisherman's passion.

Strange to say, he no longer met with the fiery indignation which had often before been the reward of his impertinence. Marcelle neither replied nor heeded; only her cheek went a little paler, her lip quivered a little more. A weight was upon her heart,

a horrible fear and despair. She was listening for a voice out of the sea or from the grave, and even in her sleep she listened—but the voice never came.





CHAPTER VII.

CORPORAL DERAL GALLOPS HIS HOBBY.

CORPORAL Derval was smoking rapidly, his face flushed all over to the crimson of a cock's comb, his black eyes burning, the pulses beating in his temples like a roll of drums, and his thoughts far away. As the grey smoke rolled before his eyes it became like the smoke of cannon, and through its mist he saw—not the interior of his Breton home, with the faces of the astonished group around him—but a visionary battle-plain, where a familiar figure, in weather-beaten hat and grey overcoat, sat, with a heavy head sunk deep between his shoulders, watching the fight from his saddle

with the stony calmness of an equestrian statue.

The voice of the little *cure*, who was sitting at the fireside, called him back to the common day.

“Corporal Derval!”

The Corporal started, drew his pipe out of his mouth, and straightened himself to “attention.” So doing, he became again conscious of his surroundings. A bright fire burnt upon the hearth, and the door was carefully closed,—for a wild cold wind was blowing. Mother Derval sat spinning in a corner, and near her, sewing, sat Marcelle. Toasting his little fat toes by the fire sat the *cure*, smoking also, with his throat-band loosened, and a glass of corn brandy at his elbow. Alain and Jannick—the remnant of the Maccabees—were seated in various attitudes about the chamber; and leaning against the wall, not far from Marcelle, in his fisherman’s costume, and with complexion coloured a light tobacco-brown by constant exposure on the sea, was Mikel Grallon.

Though the season was early summer, they

were holding a sort of *veillée*, or fireside gathering, and the old Corporal, as usual, had been enacting Sir Oracle. The little *curé* had drawn his pipe from his mouth, and was shrugging his shoulders in protestation.

“But see, my Corporal, his treatment of our Holy Father himself, the Pope of Rome!”

The Corporal knitted his brows and puffed vigorously again. All looked at him as if curious to hear his reply, the mother with a little doubtful sigh.

The Corporal was soon prepared.

“Pardon me, *m’sieu le curé*, you do not understand. All that is an arrangement between the Emperor and the Holy Father! There are some who say the Emperor threw His Holiness into a dungeon, and fed him on bread and water. Fools!—His Holiness dwelt in a palace, and fed off silver and gold, and was honoured as a saint. Do not mistake, *m’sieu le curé*; the Emperor is not profane. He fears God. Do I not know it, I who speak? Have I not seen with my own eyes, heard with my own ears? He

is God-fearing, the Emperor ; and he is sent by God to be the scourge of the enemies of France."

Mikel Grallon nodded approval.

"Right, Uncle Ewen!" he exclaimed: "he has made them dance, those Germans and those English!"

The Corporal, without turning his head, continued to address the *curé*, who was sipping his brandy with the air of a man convinced against his will and of his own opinion still. But the priest, good fellow! had few strong convictions of any kind, and hated polemics, especially at the fireside; so he contradicted no longer.

"You do not know it, you others," pursued the veteran; "but it is a grand thing to look on a man like that—to look upon him—to talk with him—to feel his breath about you!"

"As you have done, Corporal!" said the priest approvingly.

Marcelle looked at her uncle with a bright smile of admiration. Every other eye was upon him.

"As I have done!" said the veteran

proudly, and with no shame in his pride. "Yes, I who stand here! I have been with him face to face, looking in his eyes, as I do now in yours, Father Rolland! First at Cismore, then twice again. I can see him now; I can hear his voice as plain as I hear yours. Sometimes I hear it sleeping, and I leap up and feel for my gun, and look up, fancying I see the stars above me out over the open camp. I think if he came and spoke again like that above me, I should waken in my grave."

His voice sank very low now, and his keen eye, sheathed like an eagle's half asleep, looked softly on the fire. The turf was bright crimson, and as it shifted and changed he saw in it forms moving and faces flushing, like some spectral army moving in a dream.

There was a pause. Presently, to relieve the excitement of his feelings, the Corporal took from the fire a bright "coal" of turf, and, puffing vigorously, applied it to the bowl of his pipe, which had gone out.

Clearing his throat and thinning with his plump little hand the cloud of smoke which

he himself was blowing, the *cure* spoke again—

“Corporal Derval!”

The veteran, still smoking, turned his eye quietly on the speaker, and listened attentively.

“How many years ago was that little affair of Cismone?”

The Corporal's black eyes blazed, and a delighted smile overspread his grim features. Pausing deliberately, he set his pipe down upon the little chimney-piece, close to a tiny china altar and several china casts of the Saints; next, leaning forward, he carefully poked the fire with his wooden leg; and finally, turning round again to the priest, knitting his brows as if engaged in abstruse calculation, and rubbing his hands hard together, he replied in a voice that might have been heard by a whole regiment—

“It was the night of the seventeenth of September, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-six.”

If the words had been a spell, the company could not have looked more thrilled and

awed. To be quite candid, we must admit that the announcement was a familiar one, and had been made, with its accompanying veracious narrative, in the same spot and in the same way many and many a night before. But some stories are ever new, and this was one of them. Uncle Ewen's delicious assumption that he was retailing a novelty, the never-failing murmurs of pleased incredulity and astonishment for which he waited at every important turn in the incidents, the enthusiasm of the speaker and the rapt attention of all present, made the occasion always illustrious. Those who knew Uncle Ewen and had not heard his anecdote of Cismone knew him but little—had indeed never been invited to the confidences of his warlike bosom. Every one present that night had heard it a dozen times, yet each one present—with the exception perhaps of Mikel Grallon, who looked a little bored, and kept his eyes amorously fixed on Marcelle—seemed eager to hear it again.

Alain Derval listened with gloomy interest, but the face of Jannick was bright and

cheerful ; for he, of course, had no dread of the Conscription, which was still overshadowing the heart of his grown-up brother. The mother ceased her spinning. The little *curé* nodded his head, like a water-wagtail standing on the ground. Marcelle dropped her sewing into her lap, and gazed, with a look of eager motion and expectation, at her uncle.

The grenadier, full of that rarest of all emotions—the pride of a prophet who is revered in his own country—continued clearly, and as he spoke the figures around him again and again faded, and his eye searched the distance in a sort of waking dream.

“We left Trent on the sixteenth, Father Rolland ;—it was in the grey of the dawn. It was a long march, ten leagues of infernal country ; a forced march, you see. In the evening we reached a village,—the name I have forgotten, but a quaint little village on a hill. That night we were so weary that we could not have kept awake, only the word had run along the lines that the Emperor—

ah, he was only a general then!—that General Bonaparte was with us. Well, we knew that it was true, for we could *feel* him, we could swear that he was near. In the hospitals, father, the doctor goes from bed to bed, touches the pulses—so!—and says, ‘Here is fever—here is health—here is death.’ As he comes, the wounded look up and brighten; as he goes, they sink back and groan. All the wards feel him far off—every heart beats quicker at his coming, and slower at his going. Well, that is the way with the army; its pulses were beating all along the lines; you would say, ‘The General is coming—he is near—he is here—he is gone—he is ten leagues away!’ ”

He paused for breath, and Mother Derval heaved a heavy sigh. Poor heart! she was not thinking of the Emperor, but of her two great sons, already with the army. The Corporal heard the sigh, and hurried on—

“The moon was still up when we marched again in the morning. We were in three columns like three big winds of the equinox, and we rushed down on the Austrians, who

were strongly posted at Primolano. My God, but we caught them napping—we cut our way into them. Mikel Grallon, you have seen a boat run down?—Smash! that was the style. Our cavalry cut off the retreat, and thousands laid down their arms. That would have been enough for an ordinary general, but the Little Corporal was not content. Forward! he gave the word. Wurmser was at Bassano, and Mezaros was marching on Verona. We pushed on at bayonet point till we reached Cismone. It was night, and we were tired out; so when we got the word to halt, it was welcome news.”

Here Uncle Ewen suited the action to the word, and halted again. The priest nodded approvingly through his cloud of smoke.

“Now, I had a comrade in those days—a tall fellow, with a cast in his eye, but as good as gold—and his name was Jacques Monier, and he was born inland on the Rhone. We were like brothers; we shared bite and sup, and many a night lay in each other’s arms for warmth. Well, on that night of the seventeenth, Jacques was lying with

his feet to the fire we had kindled on the bare ground, and I had gone to find water. When I returned Jacques was standing on his feet, holding in his hand half a loaf of black bread, and beside him, in the light of the fire, stood—whom, think you?—the General himself. He was splashed from head to foot with mud and rain—he looked like any common soldier—but I knew him at once. He was warming his hands over the fire, and Jacques was saying, as he held out the loaf, ‘Take it *all*, my General!’ As I saw that, I looked into the General’s face, and it was white as death with hunger. Think of that; it is true, for I who tell you know what hunger is.”

A murmur of amazement ran round the room; not that the fact was new, but that such an expression of feeling was appropriate.

“Did the Emperor take the half loaf?” asked Father Rolland.

“‘Take it all,’ said Jacques; ‘half a loaf is not much.’ Well, you should have seen the General smile. He did not answer, but he took the bread into his hands, and broke

off a morsel and began to eat, handing Jacques back the rest. Then came my turn ! I held in my hand the little tin pot half full of water, and I emptied into it a little brandy that I had saved in my flask, and I handed the pot to the General. Here it is—the same—I keep it still as a souvenir.”

So saying, he detached from a hook over the fire the canteen, which Father Rolland examined over and over, and under and under, in honest admiration.

“‘Drink, my General,’ said I, saluting. Ah, I had courage in those days ! He drank, and when he tasted the brandy he smiled again ! Then he asked us our names, and we told him. Then he looked hard at us over and over again, wrapped his cloak around him, and went away. So Jacques and I sat down by the fire, and finished the bread and the brandy and water, and talked of the Emperor till we fell to sleep.”

“That was an adventure worth having !” observed the *curé*. “And the General remembered you for that service, no doubt ?”

The Corporal nodded.

"The General remembers everything," he replied. "Nine years afterwards he had not forgotten!"

"Nine years!" ejaculated the *curé*. "It was a long time to wait, Corporal. Did he give you no reward?"

Uncle Ewen turned rather red, but answered promptly—

"What reward would you give for a crust of bread and a drop of brandy, which any one would give to the beggar at his door? Besides, the General had more to think of, and it all passed like a dream. Not that we missed our reward at last. When the time came he remembered well."

"That is certain," said Mikel Grallon, who had often heard the story.

"Tell Father Rolland," cried Marcelle; "he does not know."

The Corporal hesitated, smiling.

"Yes, yes, let us hear all about it!" cried Father Rolland.

"It was in the year 1805, at the camp of Boulogne. Great changes had taken place, the Little Corporal had been declared here—

ditary Emperor of France, but Jacques Monier and I were still in the ranks. We thought the General had forgotten all about us, and what wonder if he had, seeing how busy he had been knocking off the crowns of your Kings? The grand army was there, and we of the grenadiers were to the front. That day of the coronation was fixed for a general distribution of crosses and medals. Such a day! The mist was coming in from the sea like smoke from a cannon's mouth. On the rising ground above the town was a throne—the great iron chair of the mighty King Dagobert; and all below the throne were the camps of the great armies, and right before the throne was the sea. When the Emperor sat down on the throne, our cry was enough to make the sky fall—*vive l'Empereur!*—you would have said it was the waves of the sea roaring. But look you, at that very moment the smoke of the sea parted, and the sun glanced out:—you would have said because he waved his hand! Ah, God! such a waving of banners, glittering of bayonets, flashing of swords. Such a sight is

seen but once in a lifetime; I should have to talk all night to tell you a tenth of the wonders of that day. But I am going to tell you what happened to Jacques Monier and myself. When the Emperor was passing by—we were in the front ranks, you observe—he stopped short, like *this*! Then he took a huge pinch of snuff from his waistcoat pocket, with his head on one side, like *this*, studying our faces; and then his face lighted up, and he came quite near. This is what he said—ah, that I could give you his voice!—‘Come, I have not forgotten Cismone, nor the taste of that black bread and brandy and water.’ Then he turned laughingly and spoke rapidly to Marshal Ney, who stood close by him; and Ney laughed, and showed his white teeth, looking in our direction. Well, then the great Emperor turned to us, and gave us each the Cross from his own hand, and saluted us as Corporals. I will tell you this—my eyes were dim—I could have cried like a girl; but before we could know whether we stood on our heads or our feet, he was gone!”

Corporal Derval brushed his sleeve across his eyes, which were dim again with the very memory of that interview and its accompanying honours. He stooped over the fire and fidgeted with his little finger in the bowl of his pipe, while a subdued murmur ran round the apartment.

"The Emperor has a good head to remember," observed the little *curé*. "I have been told that a good shepherd can tell the faces of every one of his flock, but this is more wonderful still. How long, do you say, had elapsed after Cismone, before you met again?"

"Nine years," answered the Corporal.

"Nine years!" repeated the *curé*. "And in those nine years, my Corporal, what battles, what thoughts, what confusion of faces!—how much to do, how much to think of! Ah, he is a great man! And was that the last time," he added, after a short pause, "that your eyes beheld him?"

"I saw him once more," said the Corporal, "only once."

"And then?"

"It was only a month or two later—the first day of December. It was the eve of the glorious battle of Austerlitz."

A thrill ran through the assembly at the mention of the magic name. The Corporal lifted his head erect, and looked absolutely Napoleonic as he towered above his hearers. The *cure* looked up, startled. Mother Derval heaved a heavy sigh, and glanced at the Corporal's wooden leg. Alain and Jannick looked serious. Mikel Grallon gazed curiously at Marcelle, whose pale face wore a strange smile.

The Corporal proceeded—

"We were crouched, seventy or eighty thousand of us, watching and waiting, when some one remembered that just a year ago that night the Little Corporal had been crowned Emperor. The word ran round. We gathered sticks and bundles of straw for joy-fires, and set them blazing to the tune of *vive l'Empereur*. It was pitch-dark, but our fires were crimson. In the middle of it all I saw him riding past. The cry ran along the camps like flame, but he passed by like

a ghost, his head sunk down between his shoulders, his eyes looking neither to the left nor right. He rode a white horse, and Jacques said he looked like the white Death riding to devour the Russians! Poor Jacques! He got his last furlough next day, and I, my marshal's baton!"

So saying, the veteran stuck out his wooden leg, and regarded it with a look half plaintive, half comic. The irreverent Jannick giggled—not at the joke, which was a too familiar one.

"And you never saw him again," said the *curé*; "that was the last time?"

The Corporal nodded his head slowly and repeatedly, in the manner of a "Chinese mandarin" at a tea-dealer's door. He was about to speak again, when the door was suddenly dashed open, and Sergeant Pipriac, followed by four or five *gendarmes*, rushed into the room.



CHAPTER VIII.

"A TERRIBLE DEATH."

SERGEANT Pipriac was ghastly pale, and in the midst of his face shone with baleful light his bright Bardolphian nose, while his one eye glared horribly, like the eye of a Cyclops. His voice shook, partly with deep potations, partly with nervous agitation, and his legs flew this way and that with frantic excitement. His men were pale too, but much less moved.

"Soul of a crow!" cried the Corporal, "what is the matter?"

The *cure* rose from his seat by the fire.

"One would say," he exclaimed, "that the good Sergeant had seen a ghost!"

Sergeant Pipriac glared at the Corporal, then at the *cure*, then all round the room, until he at last found voice.

"And one would say rightly!" he gasped. "Malediction! one would not be far wrong. Look how I shake still,—I, Pipriac, who would not fear the devil himself. A glass of water, mother,—for as I live, I choke."

The Corporal stumped over to the table and poured out a little glass of brandy.

"Take that, comrade," he said, with a nod; "it is better than water. And now," he continued, when Pipriac had swallowed the liquor, "what is all this about? and who is this that you have seen?"

"I will tell you," said Pipriac, wiping his brow with a great cotton pocket-handkerchief brilliantly ornamented with a portrait of Marshal Ney on his war steed. "What have I seen? A thousand devils! Well, I have seen your own infernal *chouan* of a nephew!"

"Rohan?" ejaculated the Corporal in a

voice of thunder, while the women started up in terror and horror, and the little *cure* lifted his hands in astonishment.

"Yes, Rohan Gwenfern—the man or the man's ghost, it is equal. Is there ever a soul here can swear to the ghost's clothes, for, look you, we have nigh stripped him clean? An eel may slip from its skin, they say; well, so can he of whom I speak. Pierre! André! who has the plunder?"

The last words were addressed to his *gendarmes*, one of whom now stood forward carrying a peasant's jacket, and another a broad-brimmed peasant's hat.

"If a ghost can wear clothes, these belong to him. Well, it is all the same now; he will never need them more."

The articles of attire were passed from hand to hand, but there was nothing to distinguish them specially as the property of the fugitive. The coat was torn down the back, as if in a severe scuffle.

Sinking into a seat by the fire, Pipriac sat until he had recovered breath, a consummation not to be achieved until he drank another

glass of his favourite stimulant. Then he said grimly, looking at the Corporal—

“His blood be on his own head. It is no fault of mine.”

The fierce frown which the Corporal's face had worn at the mention of Rohan's name relaxed. He was about to speak, when Marcelle, white as death, came between him and Pipriac.

“What do you mean?” she cried. “You have not——”

Without completing the sentence, she cast at the bayonets of the *gendarmes* a look of horror that could not be mistaken. Pipriac shook his head.

“It is not that,” he answered. “Old Pipriac is bad, but not so bad as that, my dear. Malediction! is he not his father's son, and were not Raoul Gwenfern and Pen Pipriac comrades together? By the body of the Emperor, I have not hurt a hair of the villain's head.”

“Thank God!” cried the little *curé*. “Then he has escaped.”

Pipriac screwed up his eye into something

very like a significant wink, meant to be sympathetic, but only succeeding in being horrible.

"I will tell you all about it," he said; "you and the Corporal and all here. You know, we had given him up as dead; we had searched heaven and earth and hell for him without avail; there seemed no place left for him but the bottom of the sea. Well, you may guess it was on quite different business I was prowling about to-night with my men; but that is neither here nor there: we were coming along by the great stone up yonder—coming along from a visit we had made to a little farm where there is good brandy"—here Pipriac winked diabolically again—"when we saw close to us in the moonlight, with his back to us, a man. I knew him in a moment, though I could not see his face; but I will tell you frankly this—when he turned round and looked at us I thought it was his ghost, for I had really believed him dead. Poor devil, he looked thin and lean as a spectre, and white as death, in the moon. Corporal, it was your nephew, Rohan Gwenfern."

"He is no nephew of mine," growled the veteran, but his voice trembled.

"I don't know how it happened, but we were upon him in a moment—I, André, Pierre, and the others. André was the only one that got a hold; he shook off the rest like so many mice. Before we knew it he was twenty yards away, dragging André with him towards the edge of the cliff. *Diable!* it was like a lion of Algiers carrying off a man. André had dropped his gun, and his hat had fallen off, and he was screaming to us to help him; the deserter could not shake him off. We fixed our bayonets, and after him we went."

In the excitement of his narrative, Sergeant Pipriac had risen to his feet, and he was now surrounded by all the eager circle of listeners. Marcelle clung to her uncle's arm and listened with cheeks like marble, her large eyes fixed on the speaker's face.

"'No violence,' I shrieked out; 'a thousand devils, take him alive!' When we seized him again, we were not ten yards from the edge of the great crag—you know it—it is

like a wall. The tide was in, high spring tide, and the water was black far down below. We fell upon him, all six of us, and soon had him down; it took all our strength, I can tell you. Well, we had him safe and he could not stir."

"Bravo!" said Mikel Grallon.

"It is all very well to cry 'Bravo!'" said the irascible Sergeant, "but let me tell you the devil himself could not hold him! He lay for a minute quite still, and then he began to wriggle. You are a fisherman, and have tried to hold a conger eel; well, it was like that. Before we knew what he was about, he had wriggled almost to the very edge of the cliff!"

A low cry from Marcelle; a nervous movement among the men. Then Pipriac continued—

"We were six to one, I say, but for all that we could not stop him. I held on like Death, with my two hands twisted in his jacket; the others gripped his arms and legs. But when I saw what he was about—when I heard the black sea roaring right under

us—my heart went cold. I saw there was but one way, and I loosened one hand and seized the bayonet from André; it was unscrewed, and held in his hand ready to stab. Then I shrieked out, ‘A thousand devils, keep still, or I shall bleed you!’ He looked up at me with his white face, and set his teeth together. In a moment he had rolled round on his belly, slipped himself out of his jacket, torn himself loose, and was on the very edge of the crag. Heaven, you should have been there! The loose earth on the edge broke beneath his feet; we all stood back, not daring to venture another step, and before we could draw a breath he was gone down.”

A loud wail came from the mouth of Mother Derval, mingled with prayers and sobs, and the widow sank on her knees terror-stricken. But Marcelle still stood firm, frozen, motionless. The old Corporal looked pale and conscience-stricken; while the little *cure* lifted up his hands, crying—

“Horrible! Down the precipice?”

“Right over,” exclaimed Pipriac. “It

was a horrible moment; all was pitch-dark below, and we could see nothing. But we listened, and we heard a sound below us—faint, like the smashing of an egg."

"Did he speak? Did he scream?" cried several voices.

"Not he—he had no breath left in him for that; he went down to his death as straight as a stone, and if he escaped the rocks he was drowned in the sea. Corporal Derval, don't say it was any fault of old Pipriac's! I wanted to save him, damn him! but he wouldn't be saved. In the scuffle I touched him; but that was an accident, and I wanted to keep him from his death. Hither with the jacket, Pierre—show it to Corporal Derval and the company!"

The *gendarme* called Pierre held up the jacket, while the Sergeant proceeded—

"There is a cut here, through the right sleeve—it is gashed right through; and the left sleeve is wet, see you: that is where I hurt him in the struggle."

"God help us!" cried the *cure*, horror-stricken. "My poor Rohan!"

“Bah! Why did he not give in, then?” growled Pipriac. “But let no man say it was old Pipriac that killed him. He was bent on murdering himself, and perhaps some of *us*—that, I tell you, was his game. For all that, I am sorry I wounded him. This upon the jacket must be blood. André, let me see thy bayonet.”

The *gendarme* called André stepped forward, and held up his glittering weapon, now fixed upon his gun.

“Holy Virgin, look there!” cried Pipriac. “Yes, it is blood!”

All crowded round looking upon the weapon, all save the Widow Derval, who still kept upon her knees and wailed to God in the low monotonous fashion of mourning women in Brittany.

“Yes, it is blood!” said one voice and another.

Among the faces that concentrated their gaze on the sight was that of Marcelle. The girl still stood firm, her lips set together, her eyes wide open in horrid fascination. She could see the shining blade glittering in the

light—then the dark red stains glimmering upon it—but even then she did not swoon.

"It is the last you will see of Rohan Gwen-fern in this world," said Pipriac, after a pause.

"Yes, it is blood, and no mistake!"

So saying, he wetted his forefinger with his lips and drew it deliberately down the bayonet's blade; then he held his finger up to the light, and showed it moist and red.

A murmur of horror ran round the room, while Marcelle, without uttering a sound, dropped down as if dead upon the floor.

Early the next morning, when it was *morte mer*, or dead low water, a crowd of villagers gathered right under the enormous crag on the summit of which stood the colossal Menhir. Looking up, they saw a precipitous wall of conglomerate and granite, only accessible to the feet of a goat, which was feeding far up on scanty herbage, and moving cautiously along the minute crevices of stone. It was Jannedik, with whose form the reader is already familiar. Looking down from time to time from her dizzy eminence, she

inspected the chattering throng below, and then proceeded leisurely with her refreshment.

Right at the foot of the crag lay fragments of loose earth and rock, recently detached from above, but of the body of Rohan Gwenfern there was no trace. At high water, however, the tide washed right up against the foot of the crag, and the waters there were swift and deep; so the presumption seemed to be that Rohan, after falling prone into the sea, had been washed away with the ebb.

Pipriac and his satellites, accompanied by Corporal Derval, inspected every nook and cranny of the shore, poked with stick and bayonet into every place likely and unlikely, swore infinitely, and did their duty altogether to their own satisfaction. The women gathered in knots and wailed. The villagers, with Mikel Grallon and Alain and Jannick Derval, gaped, speculated, and talked in monosyllables. Several boats were busy searching out on the sea, which was dead calm.

Sustained by the unusual courage of her temperament, Marcelle came down, with all her hidden agony in her heart, and her face tortured with tearless grief. Since she had swooned the night before—and never before had she so lost consciousness, for she was of no "fainting" breed—she had wept very little, and uttered scarcely a word. Too great a horror was still upon her, and she could not yet realize the extent of her woe. She had scarcely even uttered a prayer.

The decision of the men assembled was unanimous. Rohan must have been killed by the fall before he reached the sea; on reaching it, his body had in all probability sunk, and then been sucked by slow degrees out into the deep water. There was very little chance of finding it for some days; and, indeed, it might never rise to the surface or be recovered at all.

"And between ourselves," said Pipriac, winking grimly, "he is as well where he is, down there, as buried up yonder with a bullet in his heart. He would have been shot, you see, and he knew that. Don't say

old Pipriac killed him, however—it was no fault of mine ; but duty is duty, after all.”

Mikel Grallon, to whom these remarks were addressed, quite concurred. Honest Mikel was indefatigable in all respects—both in aiding the general search, and in convincing Marcelle that her cousin could by no possibility have escaped. He was if anything a little too zealous, and, taking into consideration the nature of the catastrophe which had just occurred, several degrees too buoyant in his spirits.

Leaving the crowd at the foot of the crag, Marcelle walked slowly along the shore in the direction of Mother Gwenfern’s cottage. The sun was shining on the sea, and in her own sweet face, but she was conscious of nothing save a heavy load upon her heart. Lifting the cottage latch, she entered in, and found the widow seated in her usual upright attitude before the fire, her grey face rigid and tearless, her lips set tight together. Standing close to the fire was Jàn Goron, who was speaking in a low voice as she appeared, but grew silent as she entered in.

It was very strange, but the widow showed no sign of absolutely overwhelming grief; her face rather betokened an intense resolve and despair. The news of the extraordinary catastrophe had not struck her to the ground; perhaps its very horror upheld her for the time being.

Silent as a ghost, Marcelle crossed the room, and sat down before the fire.

"There is no hope," she said in a low voice; "it is all as they said, Aunt Loiz."

No wail came from the lips of the widow, only a deep shivering sigh. Goron, whose whole manner betokened intense nervous agitation, looked keenly at Marcelle, and said—

"I was there this morning before them all; I could not find a trace. It is a terrible death."





CHAPTER IX.

THE JUNE FESTIVAL—AN APPARITION.

A MONTH had passed since that memorable night of the struggle on the cliffs, and it was the morning of the June Festival. The sea-pink was blooming, the lavender was in flower, the corn had thrust its green fingers from the sweet-soiled earth, and the fields behind the crag were sweet with the breath of thyme. Heaven was a golden dome, the sea was a glassy mirror, the earth was a living form with a beating heart. In that season to live at all was pleasant, but to live and be young was paradise.

There was a green dell in the meadows

behind the cliffs, and in this green dell were the ruins of a dolmen, and to this dolmen they flocked from Kromlaix, with music and singing, happy as shepherds in the golden climes of Arcady. Young men, maidens, and children came gathering merrily together; for here in Kromlaix the usual Breton custom, which excludes from the festival young people under the age of sixteen, was never enforced, and indeed scarcely known. The only members of the population rigorously excluded were the married of both sexes. The feast was the feast of youth and virginity, and no sooner did a man or maid pass the portal of Hymen than his or her festal days were over for ever.

Every youth that could play an instrument was in requisition. Alain Derval was there with a new black flute bought lately in St. Gurlott, and Jannick was to the fore with his *binion*; but besides these there were half a dozen other *binious*, and innumerable whistles both of tin and wood; and, to crown all, the larks of the air, maddened with rivalry, sang

their wildest and loudest overhead. Around the ruined dolmen, clad in all colours of the rainbow, were groups of sunburnt girls and lads; some romping and rolling, some gathering cowslips and twining daisy-chains, some running and shouting, while voices babbled and the medley of music rose. In the broad hat of every man or lad was a blade of corn, and on the breast of every girl was a flower of flax, with or without an accompaniment of wild heath and flowers.

Presently, approaching these groups from the direction of Kromlaix, came a little procession, such as might have been seen of old during the Thalysia and sung in divine numbers by Theocritus. A flock of little children ran first, their voices singing, their hands full of flowers; and behind them came a group of young men, bearing on their arms a kind of rustic chair, in which, with her lap full of buttercups and flowers of flax, sat Guineveve. By her side, laughing and talking and flourishing his stick, trotted Father Rolland, as eager as any there.

Strange to say, his presence scarcely dis-

turbed the idyllic and antique beauty of the picture; for his black coat was scarcely noticeable in the gleam of colours surrounding him, and he carried his hat in his hand, and his round face was brown as a satyr's, and he was joining with all his lungs and throat in the choric song. The little *curé* was no killjoy, and he had enough Greek spirit in his veins to forget for the nonce that skulls were ever shaven or sackcloth and ashes ever worn.

It was, however, an almost unprecedented thing to behold Father Rolland at such a gathering. The feast was of Pagan origin, discountenanced in many parishes, especially by priests of the new Napoleonic dispensation, and Father Rolland, although he was not bigot enough to interfere with the innocent happiness of the day, had never before been present on such an occasion. His coming was not altogether unexpected, however, and he was greeted on every side with a pastoral welcome.

Coming close up to the Druidic stone of the dolmen, the men set down their

burthen, while Father Rolland stood by, wiping his brow with a silk pocket-handkerchief. Then Jàn Goron, who had been one of the bearers, lifted Guineveve in his arms and placed her on a knoll among a group of girls, who greeted her by name and made room for her beside them. The eyes of Guineveve were sparkling brightly, and she spoke rapidly to her comrades in Brezonec;—it was something amusing, for they all laughed and clapped their hands.

At that moment, however, Father Rolland raised his hand. The music and laughter ceased, every face was turned one way, and all became quite still: only the larks kept on singing overhead in a very ecstasy of triumph at having (as they imagined) beaten and silenced all other competitors.

Father Rolland's face was very grave. Every face around him suddenly grew grave too.

“Boys and girls,” he said in Brezonec, “do you know what has brought me here? You cannot guess—so I will tell you. It is simple enough and very sad. It is right for you

to make merry, *mes garz*, because you are young, and because there will be a good harvest; but it is also right to remember the dead." Here the little *curé* crossed himself rapidly, and all the other members of the gathering crossed themselves too. "Sad events have taken place since last you gathered here; many have been taken away by the Conscription, some have died and been buried, and some are sick; but it is not of any of those that I want to speak, but of the poor *garz* who was your patron last year, and who is now—ah, God! where is he now? Let us hope at the feet of holy St. Gildas himself and of the blessed Virgin!"

Again, automatically, they made the sign of the cross, even little children joining. Some looked sad, others careless and indifferent, but all knew the little *curé* spoke of Rohan Gwenfern. It was the custom every year for the young people to choose among themselves a sort of king and queen, who led the sports and reigned for the day, and last year Rohan had been king and Marcelle had been queen—or, to translate

the dialect of the country, "patron" and "patroness."

"I am not going to praise or blame him who is gone; he was foolish, perhaps, and wrong; though for all that he came of a fine family, and was a pleasure to look at for strength. Well, he is dead, and there is an end—peace to his soul! Now that you are so merry, don't forget him altogether, nor poor Marcelle Derval, who was his patroness last year, and is too heart-broken, I am sure, to join you to-day."

Here the little *curé* was greeted with a loud murmur from all his hearers, and all heads were turned, looking away from him. Then, to his amaze, he saw Marcelle herself rise up and approach him. She wore no mourning but a saffron hood; her dress was dark and unadorned, and her face was pallid and subdued.

"I am here, Father Rolland," she said, as she met his eye.

"Blessed saints!" ejaculated the *curé*. "Well, my child, thou art right to cast off care; it is courage, and I am pleased."

Nevertheless the priest looked very serious. In his own heart he thought Marcelle rather unfeeling, and would have been better satisfied to hear that she had stayed away.

"I did not think of coming at first," she said, approaching close, "but Guineveve begged me, and at last I consented. It is for Guineveve's sake I came, and for Jàn Goron's. My Cousin Rohan is not here to-day, and will never be here again, but I know what would have been his wish. He would have wished Jàn Goron to be patron, and Guineveve to be patroness; and that is my wish, too."

There was a moment's silence, then came a loud crying and clapping of hands. "Yes, yes!" cried the groups of men and girls, only a few dissentient voices crying, "No, no!" But the affair had been settled long before, and that was why Goron had escorted Guineveve thither.

"The blessings of the saints be upon you, Marcelle Derval," said the *curé*, "for you have a kind heart; though, for that matter, Guineveve is a girl in a thousand. Well, boys and girls, is that your choice?"

The answer was unmistakable, the consent almost unanimous. And already, seated on a knoll in the midst of a garland of girls, Guineveve was enjoying her sovereignty with supreme and perfect happiness, light in her face, joy in her heart, flowers on her breast and in her lap; while Goron, clad brightly as a bridegroom, stood over her, looking down into her eyes with perfect admiration and love.

Marcelle saw it all—the bright, the happy smiling faces—and her thoughts went back to last year, when she and Rohan, then almost unconscious of passion, were merry-making in the same place. Her cheek grew whiter, and for a moment all she saw went dim. Then she thought to herself, “No one must know! I will creep away as soon as I can, for it all seems dreadful now Rohan is dead.”

After a few more words, Father Rolland lifted up his hands to pronounce a blessing; and all knelt down on the grass around him in silence as he prayed. It was done in a minute, and before they could all rise up

again the priest was trotting away back to the village. The pipes and *binious* struck up again, sports and rompings began, all voices chattered at once like the voices of innumerable birds, and great grew the fun of the feast.

It was the custom for the new patron and patroness to lead off the *gavotte*, or country dance; so Goron led out Guineveve, and the dance began. One after another couple joined, all uniting hand in hand, till they formed one long chain of shining glancing bodies, leaping, crying, intertwining, interturning, performing the most extraordinary steps with heel and toe, till the eyes grew dizzy to look at them.

"Marcelle, will you not dance?" said a voice in her ear.

She was standing looking on like one in a dream when she heard the voice, and she did not turn round, for the tones were familiar.

"I shall not dance to-day, Mikel Grallon."

"That is a pity," said Mikel quietly, for he was too shrewd to show his annoyance.

"One turn—come!"

"No, I am going home."

"Going home, and the sport has only just commenced! But you will try your charm on the love-stone before you go?"

It was the custom on that day for every single woman to leave a flower of flax, and every single man a blade of corn, on the stone of the dolmen. So long as flower and blade keep their freshness the hearts of their depositors are faithful; if they wither before the week is out, all will go wrong. So Marcelle answered—

"I have brought no posy, and I shall try no charm. It is all foolish, and I shall not stay."

And truly, in a little time she had slipped away from the company, whose merry laughter sounded in the distance behind her, and was hastening heart-broken homeward. She walked fast, for she was trying in vain to shake off Mikel Grallon, who followed close to her, talking volubly.

"You shall not soil your fingers or carry a load—no, not even a drop of water from the Fountain; and I shall take you sometimes

to Brest to visit my uncle who keeps the *cabaret*, and you shall have shoes and new gowns from Nantes. And if the good God sends us children, one of the boys shall be made a priest."

This was plain speaking for a wooer, but Marcelle was not shocked. The height of a Breton mother's ambition is to have a son in the priesthood, and Marcelle was by no means insensible to the promise, especially as she knew that the speaker had means enough to carry it out.

"I shall never marry," she replied vaguely.

"Nonsense, Marcelle! The good Corporal and thy mother wish it, and I will take you without a dower. It is yourself that I wish, for I have enough of my own. I have set my heart upon it. . . . You should see the great press of linen my mother has prepared for the home-coming: soft as silk and white as snow—it would do your heart good, it smells so kindly."

Marcelle glanced at him sidelong, almost angrily.

"I have told you twenty times that I will

not have you. If you speak to me of it again, I shall hate you, Mikel Grallon."

Mikel scowled—he could not help it; his brows were knitted involuntarily, and an ugly light shot out of his eyes. He took a false step, and lost his temper.

"I know why you treat me so. You are thinking of that *chouan* of a cousin!"

Marcelle turned upon him suddenly.

"If he was a *chouan*, you are worse. He is dead—his soul is with God; and it is like you to speak of him so."

Mikel saw his blunder, and hastened to retrieve it, if possible.

"Do not be angry, for I did not mean it. Rohan Gwenfern was a good fellow; but, look you, he is dead—besides, you were cousins, and the Bishop might not have been willing. 'Drowned man can't marry dry maid,' says the proverb. Look you again, Rohan was poor; my little finger is worth more silver than his whole body. I am a warm man, I, though I say it that should not."

More he uttered in the same strain, but all

to the same effect. At last he left her and returned to the gathering, angry with himself, with her, with all creation. For her last words to him were, as she passed down into the village, "Go back and choose a better ; I shall never marry but one man, and that man is lying dead at the bottom of the sea."

That night a singular circumstance occurred, which was remembered for many a long year afterwards by the superstitious in Kromlaix. A party of fishermen, returning home late after lobster trawling, and rowing on the glassy sea close under the shadow of the gigantic cliffs, suddenly beheld an apparition.

There was no moon, and, although it was summer-tide, a black veil covered the sky. Under the cliff-shadow all was black and still, save for the solemn crying of the unseen birds and the moaning of the sea on rock and sand. There was not a breath of wind, and the men were rowing wearily home, with sails furled and masts lowered, when their eyes were dazzled by a sudden ray of brilliance

streaming out of the Gate of the Cathedral of St. Gildas.

Now, as we have seen before, the Cathedral was well known to be haunted, and there was scarcely one man in Kromlaix who would have entered it, sailing or afoot, after sunset. On the present occasion it was high water, and the Cathedral was floored with the liquid malachite of the sea.

Abreast of the Gate before they perceived the light, they raised their terrified eyes and looked in, each man crossing himself and murmuring a prayer, for the very spot was perilous. In a moment they were petrified by fear,—for the vast Cathedral was illuminated, and high up on the mossy altar stood a gigantic figure holding a torch of crimson fire! The light illumed the face of the cliff behind him, save where his colossal shade trembled, reaching up to heaven. His shape was dark and distorted, his face almost indistinguishable, but every man who gazed, when he came to compare his impression with that of his companions, agreed that the apparition was that of the blessed St. Gildas.

The view was only momentary, but before it ceased another terror was added. Crouched at the feet of the Saint was a dark figure, only the head of which was perceptible, and this head, ornamented with hideous horns and with eyes of horrible lustre, was gazing up awe-stricken in the face of Gildas. The men covered their eyes in horror, and uttered a low cry of terror. Instantly the light was extinguished, the figures vanished, and the whole Cathedral was in pitch darkness. Sick, horrified, praying, and half swooning, the fishermen rowed madly away.

They had seen enough; for in that moment of horror they had not only perceived the terrible Saint so dear to God, but had recognized in the figure at his feet, which was doubtless doing some dreadful penance for iniquities to mankind, the horrid lineaments of the EVIL ONE himself!



CHAPTER X.

MIKEL GRALLON MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THE day after the miraculous vision in the Cathedral of St. Gildas all Kromlaix was ringing with the tale. No one questioned for a moment the veracity of the eye-witnesses ; indeed, everybody was only too ready to accept without question anything supernatural, and the present account possessed every attraction the most superstitious individual could desire. There might have been a certain commonplace about the appearance of the Saint himself—he had often been seen revisiting the glimpses of the moon ; but he had never before, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, been

beheld actually in the company of "Master Roberd," the horned one of Satanic fame. Success emboldens the most timid tale-teller, and the eye-witnesses, finding their hearers ready to accept any and every embellishment, gave full liberty to their superstitious imaginations.

"He had two great eyes, each as red as a boat lantern," said one of these worthies, an aged fisherman; "and they looked up in the blessed Saint's face all bloodshot and glittering—one flash of them would have withered up a mortal man; but the blessed Saint held up his torch and made him go through his confession like any good Christian, word after word."

The speaker was lying on the shingle surrounded by a group of men and boys, among whom was Mikel Grallon.

"Made him go through his confession?" echoed one of the group.

"How do you know that, old Evran? You could not hear?"

The first speaker nodded his head sagaciously.

“Ask Penmarch! question Gwesklen! They were there. For my own part, I believe ‘Master Roberd’ was repeating the blessed Litany, and God knows he would rather burn for a hundred hundred years than be made to do so. One thing is certain—here stood the blessed Saint, and there knelt the Black One; and every one knows that is the sort of penance the Saint puts upon him whenever he catches him on holy ground.”

A murmur of wonder went round. Then Mikel Grallon said, knitting his brows heavily—

“It is strange enough. A torch in his hand, you said?”

“A torch. A great wild light like a comet, Mikel Grallon. It made us nearly blind to look.”

“And the Saint—you saw him quite plain?”

“Am I blind, Mikel Grallon? There he stood: you would have said it was an angel from heaven. Gwesklen says he had great wings; for my own part, I did not see the

wings, but I will tell you what I did see—the devil's feet, and they were great cloven hoofs, horrible to behold."

There was a long pause. Presently Mikel Grallon muttered, as if communing to himself—

"Suppose, after all, it had been a man!"

The old fisherman stared at Grallon with prolonged and stupefied amazement.

"A man!" he echoed. "Holy saints keep us, a man!"

The others repeated the words after him, staring at Grallon as if he had been guilty of some horrible blasphemy.

"A man in the Cathedral of St. Gildas at dead of night!" he exclaimed, with a contemptuous laugh. "A man as tall as a tree, shining like moonlight, and with wings, with wings! A man teaching 'Master Roberd' his confession! Mikel Grallon, art thou mad?"

Grallon was in a minority. Less grossly superstitious than many of his fellow-villagers, and disposed to inquire in his own rude manner into matters they took on hearsay,

he was regarded by a goodly number of his neighbours as officious and impertinent. For all that, he bore the character of a pious man, and did not care to lose it.

"Oh, I say nothing!" he observed. "Such things have been, and the Cathedral is a dreadful place. But is it not strange that the Saint should carry a light?"

"Strange?" grunted the fisherman. "And what is strange in that, Mikel Grallon? Was it not black-dark, with never a peep of moon or star, and how should the blessed Saint see his way without a torch of fire to light him? Strange—ugh! It would have been strange if the blessed one had been standing there with 'Master Roberd' in the dark, like a miserable mortal man."

This answer was so conclusive that not another word was possible; and, indeed, Mikel Grallon seemed to think he had committed a blunder in making so very absurd a suggestion. This was decidedly the opinion of his hearers, for as Grallon walked away into the village, leaving the group behind him, the old salt observed, shrugging his shoulders—

“Mikel Grallon used to be a sensible man; but he is in love, you see, and perhaps that is why he talks like a fool.”

Here, doubtless, the weather-wise worthy was at fault, for Mikel Grallon was no fool; he was only a very suspicious man, who never took anything for granted, always excepting, of course, the dogmas of that religion wherein he had been born and bred. Physically, he was timid; intellectually, he was bold. Had he been one of the original witnesses of the vision in the Cathedral, he would possibly have shared the terror of his comrades to the full, and brought away as exaggerated a narrative; but receiving the account coolly in the broad light of day, reading it in the light of recent events, weighing it in the scales of his judgment against his knowledge of the folly and stupidity of those who brought it, he had—almost involuntarily, for with such men suspicion is rather an instinct than a process of thought—come to a conclusion startlingly at variance with the conclusions of the general populace. What that conclusion

was remains to be seen ; meantime, he kept it carefully to himself. His time was fully occupied in prosecuting his suit with Marcelle Derval.

Now, he had not exaggerated in the least when he had said that that suit had been favourably heard by the heads of the Derval household. By means of innumerable little attentions, not the least of which lay in his power of listening without apparent weariness to tales that were repeated over and over again, and which had invariably the same Imperial centre of interest, he had quite succeeded in winning the heart of the Corporal ; while in the eyes of Mother Derval he was a low-spoken, pious person, of excellent family, well able to maintain a wife, and well worthy of a virtuous girl's esteem. As to Alain and Jannick, he found in them tolerable allies so long as he plied them — particularly the wicked humourist Jannick—with little presents such as youths love. He might, therefore, be said with justice to be already an approved suitor in the eyes of the whole family.

Had Marcelle been a girl of a different stamp, more submissive and less headstrong, the betrothal would have been as good as concluded. Unfortunately for the suit, however, the chief party concerned was resolute in resistance, and they knew her character too well to use harsh measures. The etiquette for a Kromlaix maiden under such circumstances was to take unhesitatingly the good or bad fortune which her guardians selected for her, to leave all the preliminaries in their hands, and only at the last moment to come forward and behold the object of the family choice. Marcelle, however, had a way of following her own inclinations, and was not likely to alter her habits when choosing a husband.

Just then the very thought of love was terrible to her. No sooner did she feel assured that Rohan was dead, than all her old passion sprang up twentyfold, and she began to bathe the bitter basil-pot of memory with secret and nightly tears. She forgot all his revolt, all his outrage against the Emperor; nay, the Emperor himself was

forgotten in the sudden inspiration of her new and passionate grief. "I have killed him!" she cried to herself again and again. "Had I not drawn the fatal number he might be living yet; but he is dead, and I have killed him; and would that I might die too!"

In this mood she assumed mourning—a saffron coif, dress of a dark and sombre dye: there were young widows in the place who did not wear so much. Nor did she now conceal from any one the secret of her loss. "Tell them all, mother; I do not care. I loved my Cousin Rohan; I shall love him till I die."

In due time, of course, this travelled to the ears of Mikel Grallon.

Strange to say, honest Mikel, so far from persisting under the circumstances, delicately withdrew into the background, and ceased to thrust his attentions on Marcelle. This conduct was so singular in a being so pertinacious that it even awakened amazement in the Corporal.

"Soul of a crow!" he said, "have you no courage? She sees you too little—let her

know that you mean to win. Girls' hearts are taken by storm ; but you have not the spirit of a fly."

Mikel Grallon sighed.

"It is no use, Uncle Ewen. She is thinking too much of one that is dead."

Corporal Derval scowled, but replied not ; he knew well to whom Grallon was referring, and having latterly thought more tenderly and pityingly of his unfortunate nephew, not without certain sharp twinges of the conscience, he did not care to discuss the subject. Under any other circumstances he would have been savage with Marcelle for having formed her secret attachment to her cousin ; but the bloodhounds of the Conscription had been unleashed, and the man, his own flesh and blood, had been hunted down to death,—and now, after all, silence was best. It cannot be denied that at this period the Corporal showed an uneasiness under fire unworthy of such a veteran. He who would have cheerfully led a forlorn hope, or marched up to the very jaws of a cannon, now fidgeted uneasily in his chimney

corner whenever he felt the great silent eyes of his niece quietly fixed upon him. He felt guilty, awkward, almost cowardly, and was glad even of Mikel Grallon to keep him company.

But, as we have already hinted, Grallon's attentions began to fall off rapidly soon after that memorable vision of the fishermen at the Gate of St. Gildas. You would have said, observing him closely, that the man was the victim of some tormenting grief. He became secret and mysterious in his ways, fond of solitude, more than ever reticent in his speech; his days were often passed in solitary rambles among the cliffs, his nights in lonely sails upon the sea; and from the cliffs he brought no burthen of weed or samphire, from the sea no fish. He, naturally a busy man, became preternaturally idle. There could scarcely be found a finer example, to all appearance, of melancholia induced by unsuccessful love.

It was one wet day, during one of his long rambles, that, suddenly approaching the Ladder of St. Triffine, he found himself face to face

with a woman who leant upon a staff and carried a basket. She was very pale, and breathing hard from the ascent, but when she encountered him her lips went quite blue and a dull colour came into her cheeks.

"What, Mother Gwenfern!" he exclaimed; "you are the last woman one would have thought of meeting in such weather. Shall I carry your basket for you? You must be tired."

As he held out his hand to take her burthen from her, she drew back shivering. A thick misty rain was falling, and her cloak was dripping wet.

"God's mercy, mother! you are pale as death—you have caught fever, perhaps, and will be ill."

As he spoke, he watched her with a look of extraordinary penetration, which strongly contradicted the simplicity of his manner. She had been struggling all this time for breath, and at last she found her speech.

"I have been gathering dulse. You are right, Mikel; it is a long journey, and I should not have come so far."

"It is not good for old limbs to be so fatigued," replied Grallon simply; "at your age, mother, you should rest. Look you, that is what all the neighbours say is strange."

"What is strange?" asked the woman sharply.

"A little while ago you were for ever sitting by the fire or busy in the cottage; not even on a holiday did you cross the door; and we all thought it was your sickness and were sorry. Yet since you have lost your son—amen to his soul!—you are never content at home; you are for ever wandering up and down as if you could not rest in peace."

"That is true," exclaimed Mother Gwenfern, looking at him fixedly with her cold scared eyes; "I cannot rest since"—she paused a moment shivering—"since they killed my boy."

"Ah, yes," said Grallon, forcing into his face a look of sympathy. "But, mother, in such weather!"

"When one has a broken heart, wind and rain cannot make it better or worse. Good day, Mikel Grallon."

As the tall figure of the old woman disappeared in the direction of the village, Grallon watched it with a strange and cunning look. When it was quite invisible, he quietly descended the Ladder to the sea-shore, walked quickly along the beach, and came as close as possible to the Cathedral; but the tide was too high for a passage round to the Gate. So he stood on the water's edge, like one in profound meditation; then, as if an idea had suddenly occurred to him, he began curiously to examine the shingly shore.

He soon came upon traces of human feet, just where the retiring tide left the shingle still dark and wet; the heavy marks of wooden shoes were numerous and unmistakable—Mother Gwenfern had been wandering to and fro on the water's edge. All at once Grallon stooped eagerly down over a patch of sand, soft as wax to take any impression left upon it; and there, clear and unmistakable, was the print of a naked human foot.

With a patient curiosity worthy of some investigator of natural science, some short-

sighted ponderer over "common objects of the sea-shore," Mikel Grallon examined this footprint in every possible way and light—spanned and measured it lengthways and across, stooped down close over it with an extraordinary fascination. Not the immortal Crusoe, discovering *his* strange footprint on the savage shore, was more curious. Having completed his examination, Mikel Grallon smiled.

It was not a nice smile, that of Mikel Grallon; rather the smile of Reynard the Fox or Peeping Tom of Coventry—the smile of some sly and cruel creature when some other weaker creature lies at its mercy, though mercy it has none. With this smile upon his face, Mikel reascended the steps and returned quietly and peacefully to his virtuous home.

From that day forth his conduct became more peculiar than ever; his monomania so possessing him that he neglected proper sustenance and lost his natural rest. Curiously enough, he had now so great a fascination for Mother Gwenfern's cottage

that he kept it all day in his sight, and when night came was not far from the door. It thus happened that the widow, whenever she crossed her threshold, was almost certain to encounter honest Mikel, who followed her persistently with expressions of sympathy and offers of service; so that, to escape his company, she would return again into her cottage, looking wearied out and pale as death. And whenever he slept, some other pair of eyes was on the watch; for he had a confidant, some nature silent as his own.

Whatever thought was in his mind it never got abroad. Like one that prepares a hidden powder mine, carefully laying the train for some terrible explosion, he occupied himself night and day, hugging his secret—if secret he had—to his bosom, with the characteristic vulpine smile. Whenever he found himself in the company of Marcelle, this vulpine look was exchanged for one of pensive condolence, as if he knew her sorrow and sympathized—under gentle protest, however—with its cause.

A little later on, Mikel Grallon had another

adventure which, however trifling in itself, interested him exceedingly, and led at last to eventful consequences.

He was moving one evening along the cliffs, not far from the scene of the fatal struggle between Rohan Gwenfern and the *gendarmes*, and he was very stealthily observing the green tract between him and the village, when he suddenly became aware of a figure moving close by him and towards the verge of the crags. Now, it had grown quite late, and the moon had not yet risen, but there was light enough in the summer twilight to discern a shape with its face turned upon his and moving backward like a ghost. For a moment his heart failed him, for he was superstitious; but recovering himself, he sprang forward to accost the shape. Too late; it had disappeared, as if over the very face of the cliff—as if straight down to the terrible spot where the traces of death had been found some weeks before.

Strange to say, this time also, but not until he had recovered from the first nervous shock of the meeting, Mikel Grallon smiled.

After that, his watchings and wanderings grew more numerous than ever, and his reputation as a confirmed night-bird spread far and wide. "I will tell you this," said one gossip to another; "Mikel Grallon has something on his mind, and he is thinking far too much of the old Corporal's niece." Even the announcement of the arrival of the mackerel did not alter him; for, instead of taking his seat as captain of his own boat, he put another man in his place, and took only his one share as owner of the boat. He had the air of a man for ever on the watch—a contraband air, as of one ever expecting to surprise or be surprised.

At last, one day, final and complete success having crowned his endeavours, he walked quietly into the Corporal's kitchen, where the family was gathered at the midday meal, and said in a low voice, after passing the usual salutations—

"I bring news. Rohan Gwenfern is not dead; he is hiding in the Cathedral of St. Gildas."



CHAPTER XI.

THE HUE AND CRY.

ALAIN and Jannick were out at the fishing, and the only members of the family present were the Corporal, Mother Derval, and Marcelle. The Corporal fell back in his chair aghast, gazing wildly at Mikel; Mother Derval, accustomed to surprises, only dropped her arms by her side and uttered a deep moan; but Marcelle, springing up, with characteristic presence of mind ran to the door, which had been left wide open, and locked it quickly,—then, returning white as death, with her large eyes fixed on Mikel, she murmured—

“Speak low, Mikel Grallon! for the love of God, speak low.”

"It is true," said Grallon in a thick whisper; "he lives, and I have discovered it by the merest chance. True, I have suspected it for a long time, but now I know it for a certainty."

"Holy Mother, protect us!" cried the widow. "Rohan—alive!"

By this time the Corporal had recovered from his stupor, and advancing on Grallon before Marcelle could utter another word, he exclaimed—

"Are you drunk, Mikel Grallon, or are you come here sober to outrage us with a lie? Soul of a crow! take care, or you will see me angry, and then we shall quarrel in good earnest, *mon garz*."

"Speak lower!" said Marcelle, with her hand upon her uncle's arm. "If the neighbours should hear!"

"What I say is the truth," responded Mikel, looking very white round the edges of his lips; "and I swear by the blessed bones of St. Gildas himself, that Rohan is alive. I know his hiding-place, and I have seen him with my own eyes."

"His spirit, perhaps!" groaned the widow. "Ah, God! he died a violent death, and his poor spirit cannot rest."

Mikel Grallon cast a contemptuous look in the widow's direction, and faintly shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not one of those who go about seeing ghosts, mother; and I know the difference between spirits of air and men of flesh and blood. Go to! This is gospel that I am telling you, and Rohan is hiding in the great Cathedral, as I said."

"In the Cathedral!" echoed the Corporal.

"There, or close at hand; of that I am certain. I have tracked him thrice, and thrice he has disappeared into the Cathedral; but I was alone, see you, and I did not care to follow too close, for he is desperate. I should have put my hand upon him once, but he walks the cliffs like a goat, and he went where I could not follow."

The news, though thus quietly announced, fell like a thunderbolt on the hearth of the Corporal, and perfect consternation followed. As for Uncle Ewen, he was completely over-

powered, for the announcement of his nephew's death had been pleasant compared with the announcement that he was not dead at all; since to be alive was still to be in open arms against the Emperor, to be still a miserable "deserter," worthy the contempt and hate of all good patriots; to be, last and worst, a doomed man, who might be seized and shot like a dog at any moment. Uncle Ewen was horror-stricken. Of late he had been conscience-twined on account of Rohan, and had secretly reproached himself for undue harshness and severity; and in his own stern way he had thought very softly of the gentle dead, so that more than once his rough sleeve had been brushed across his wet eyes; but now to hear all at once that all his sorrow had been wasted, and that the spectre of family shame was still haunting the village, was simply overwhelming.

Marcelle, for her part, rose to the occasion instead of sinking under it. She was one of those unique women who feel rather than think, and whose feeling at once assumes the form of rapid action. With her eyes so

steadily and questioningly fixed on his face that Grallon became quite tremulous and uncomfortable, she seemed occupied for a brief space in reading the honest man's very soul; but speedily satisfying herself that she had completely mastered that not very abstruse problem, she said with decision—

“Speak the truth again, Mikel Grallon! Have you spoken of this to any other living soul?”

Mikel stammered and looked confused; he replied, however, in the negative.

“If you have not spoken, then remember—his life is in your hands, and, if he is discovered through you, his blood will be upon your head, and the just God will punish you.”

Mikel stammered again, saying—

“Others may have also seen him; nay, I have heard Pipriac himself say that he suspects! Look you, you must not blame me if he is found, for other men have eyes as well as I. Ever since that night of the vision in the Cathedral, they have been on the watch; for it is clear now that it was not

the blessed Saint at all, but a mortal man, Rohan Gwenfern himself."

This was said with such manifest confusion and hesitation, and accompanied with so guilty a lowering of the vulpine eyes, that Marcelle leaped at once to a conclusion fatal to honest Mikel's honour. She fixed her look again upon him, so searchingly and so terribly, that he began bitterly to reproach himself for having brought his information in person at all. The truth is, he had expected a wrathful explosion on the part of the Corporal, and had calculated, under cover of that explosion, on playing the part of an innocent and sympathetic friend of the family; but finding that all looked at him with suspicion and horror, as on one who had conjured up some terrible phantom, and who was responsible for all the consequences of the fact he had announced, he lost courage and betrayed too clearly that his conduct had not been altogether disinterested.

At last Uncle Ewen began to find his tongue.

"But it is incredible!" he exclaimed. "Out

there among the cliffs, with no one to bear him food, a man would *starve!*”

“One would think so,” said Grallon; “but I have seen his mother wandering thither with her basket, and the basket, be sure, was never empty. Then Rohan was not like others; he is well used to living out among the sea-birds and the rock-pigeons. At all events, there he is, and the next thing to ask is, What is to be done?”

The Corporal did not reply; but Marcelle, now pale as death, drew from her breast a small cross of black bog oak, and holding it out to Mikel, said, still with her large eyes fixed on his—

“Will you swear upon the Blessed Cross, Mikel Grallon, that you have kept the secret?”

Mikel looked amazed, even hurt, at the suggestion.

“Have I not just discovered it, and to whom should I speak? If you wish it, I will swear!”

Providence, however, had not arranged that Mikel Grallon was to commit formal

perjury ; for at that moment some one was heard fingering the latch, and when the door did not open there came a succession of heavy knocks.

“ Open ! ” cried a voice.

Even the Corporal went pale, while the mother sank on her knees close to the spinning-wheel in the corner, and Marcelle held her hand upon her heart.

“ Holy Virgin ! who can it be ? ” whispered Marcelle.

“ Perhaps it is only one of the neighbours,” responded Mikel, who nevertheless looked as startled as the rest.

“ Open ! ” said the voice ; and heavy blows on the door followed.

“ Who is there ? ” cried Marcelle, running over to the door, with her hand upon the key.

“ In the name of the Emperor ! ” was the reply.

She threw open the door, and in ran Pipriac, armed, and followed by a file of *gendarmes* with fixed bayonets. His Bartholomian nose was purple with excitement, his little eye was twinkling fiercely, his

short legs were quivering and stamping on the ground.

"*Tous les diables !*" he cried, "why is your door locked at mid-day, I ask you, you who are honest people? Do you not see I am in haste? Where is Corporal Derval?"

"Here," answered the old man, straightening himself to "attention," but trembling with excitement.

"It is strange news I bring you—news that will make you jump in your skins; I cannot linger, but I was passing the door, and I thought you would like to hear. Ah, Mother Derval, good morrow!—Ah, Mikel Grallon! I have a message for you; you must come with us and have some talk."

"What is the matter, comrade?" asked the Corporal in a husky voice.

"This—the dead has risen; ha, ha! what think you of that?—the dead has risen! It is more wonderful than you can conceive, comrade, and you will not know whether to be sorry or glad; but your nephew, the deserter, is not killed,—*corbleu*, he is like a cat or an eel, and I defy you to kill him!

Well, he is alive, and that is why we are here again !”

During this little scene Marcelle had scarcely once taken her eyes off Mikel Grallon, who showed more and more traces of confusion ; but now she advanced to the Sergeant and said in a voice low, yet quick with agony—

“ How do you know he is alive ? Have you seen him with your eyes ? ”

“ Not I,” answered Pipriac ; “ but others have seen, and it is on their information I come. Malediction ! how the girl stares ! She’s as pale as a ghost ! ”

“ Marcelle ! ” cried the widow, still upon her knees.

But Marcelle paid no heed ; white as a marble woman, she gazed in the irascible face of the little Sergeant.

“ You have had information ! ” she echoed in the same low voice.

“ *Tous les diables !* yes. Is that so strange ? Some honest rascal ”—here the Sergeant glanced rapidly at Mikel Grallon—“ has seen the poor devil in his hiding-

place, and has sent us word. If you ask me who has informed, I answer—That is *our* business; though he were the fiend himself, he will get the reward. Don't blame old Pipriac for doing his duty, that is all! It is no fault of mine, comrades. But I must not linger—Right about face, march!—and, Mikel Grallon, a word with you.”

The *gendarmes* filed out of the cottage, and Pipriac, with a fierce nod to the assembled company, followed. Mikel Grallon was quietly crossing over to the door, when Marcelle intercepted him.

“Stay, Mikel Grallon!”

The fisherman stood still, not meeting the angry eyes of the girl, but glancing nervously at the Corporal, who had sunk into a chair and was holding his hand to his head as if in stupor.

“I understand all now, Mikel Grallon,” said Marcelle in a clear voice, “and you cannot deceive me any more. Go! You are an ingrate—you are a wretch—you are not fit to live.”

Mikel, thus addressed, even by the woman he professed to love, gave the snarl of all low curs in extremity, and showed his teeth with a malicious expression, but he quailed before the eyes that were burning upon him.

"You have watched night and day, you have hunted him down, and you will have the blood money when he is found. Yes, you have betrayed him, and you have come here to deceive my uncle with a lie, that your wickedness might not be known. God will punish you ! may it be soon !"

"It is false !" cried Mikel, scowling wildly.

"It is you that are false ; false to my uncle, to my poor cousin, to me. I always hated you, Mikel Grallon, but now I would like to be your death. If I were a man, I would *kill* you ! Go !"

With a fierce look and an angry shrug of the shoulders, the man passed out, quite cowed by the looks and gestures of the angry girl. It was characteristic of Marcelle that she could bear great agony in silence and in reticence, but that she could not bear the storm of her own passionate nature when

once it rose. As Mikel disappeared, she uttered a wild cry, threw her arms up in the air, and then, for the second time in her life, swooned suddenly away.





CHAPTER XII.

ON THE CLIFFS.

BUT there among the cliffs, midway between the top of the precipice above and the wave-washed rocks below, a man is crouching, so still, so moveless, he seems a portion of the crag.

It is one of those dark summer afternoons, when the heavens are misted with their own breath, and a cold blue-grey broods upon the sea, and there is no stir at all, either of sunshine, or wind, or wave. The roar of the sea can be heard miles away inland; all is so very still; and there is something startling in the shrill minute-cry of the great blue-backed gull, as it sails slowly along

the water's edge, predatory as a raven, yet white and beautiful as a dove.

Where the man sits, there is a niche in the cliff; a dizzy path leads to the rocks below, but overhead the precipice overhangs and is utterly inaccessible. Not one hundred yards away stands, roofless under heaven, the great natural Cathedral, and the man from where he sits can see the gleaming of its emerald floor, formed now by the risen tide. Over the Cathedral flocks of kittiwake gulls are hovering like white butterflies, uttering low cries which are quite drowned in the heavy cannonade of the sea.

The sun is invisible, but the sullen purple which suffuses the western horizon shows that he is sinking to his setting; and far out upon the water the fishing-boats are crawling out like black specks to the night's harvest. It is the dark end of a dark day, a day of warm yet sunless calm.

The man has been crouching in his niche for hours, listening and waiting. At last he stirs, throwing up his head like some startled animal, and his eyes, wild and eager, look up

to the dizzy cliffs above his head. Something flutters far above him, like a sea-gull flying, or like a handkerchief waving; and directly he perceives it he rises erect, puts his finger and thumb between his teeth, and gives a shrill whistle. Could any mortal eye behold him now, it would look with pity; for he is bareheaded, his beard has grown wild and long, his features are darkened and distorted with exposure to the elements, and the clothes he wears—a coloured shirt and *bragou-bras*—are almost in rags. His shirt is torn open at the shoulder, and his feet are bare. Altogether, he resembles some wild, hunted being, some wretched type of the primæval woods, rather than a rational and a peaceful man.

Looking up again eagerly, he sees something descending rapidly from the top of the cliff. It is a small basket, attached to a long and slender cord. As it descends, he reaches out his hands eagerly, and when it reaches him he pulls gently at the cord, as a signal to the person who stands above. Then taking from the basket some black bread, some coarse cheese, and a small flask containing

brandy, he places them on the rock beside him, and pulls again softly at the cord, when the basket, thus emptied of its contents, rapidly re-ascends.

His niche in the crag is a dizzy one, fitter for the feet of eagle or raven than those of a man ; but crouching close against the face of the crag, with his feet set firm, he proceeds rapidly, yet methodically, to satisfy his appetite. He is doubtless too hungry to delay ; his eyes, at least, have the eager gleam of famished animals. When his meal is over, he carefully gathers together what remains, and wraps it in a kerchief, which he unloosens from his neck. The brandy is his *bonne-bouche*, and he sips that slowly, drop by drop, as if every drop is precious ; and so indeed it is, for already it lights his famished cheek with a new and more lustrous life. He sips only a portion, then thrusts the flask into his breast.

Even now he seems in no hurry to go, but takes his *siesta*, watching the purple darkness deepen across the sea. There is a strange, far-away look in his eyes, which

are gentle still, despite the worn and savage lineaments of his face. The smoke of the waters which break far beneath him rises up to his seat, and the great roar is in his ears, but he is too familiar with these things to heed them now; he is occupied with his own thoughts, and half unconscious of external sights and sounds.

But suddenly, as a hare starts in his form, the man stirs again—stands erect—looks up—listens; and now he hears above him a sound more startling than the sea—the sound of human voices. A sick horror overspreads his features, and he begins, with swift and stealthy feet, to descend the dangerous path which leads to the shore; but, as he does so, he is arrested by a cry far overhead.

Looking up, he sees the gleam of human faces overhanging the gulf and glaring down upon him. He staggers for a moment and grows dizzy, but recovering himself in time, glides rapidly on; as he goes, the wild cry rises again faintly overhead, and he knows that his pursuers have at last discovered him and are again upon his track.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE FACES IN THE CAVE.

LEAVING Kromlaix with his *gendarmes*, Sergeant Pipriac at once made his way up to the great Menhir, and thence along the green plateau above the cliffs. In eager conversation with him walked Mikel Grallon, and behind them came excited groups of the population—men, women, and children—all in high excitement now the “hue and cry” had again begun. They had not proceeded far when they encountered Mother Gwenfern, creeping slowly along with her basket on her arm, and looking gaunt and pale as any ghost. Never one who stood upon much ceremony,

Pipriac pounced upon the old woman with savage eagerness, and roundly announced his errand.

“Aha! and have we discovered you at last, Mother Loiz? *Tous les diables!* Has old Pipriac found you out, though you thought him so blind, so stupid? What have you got in your basket—tell me that? Where do you come from—where are you going? Malediction! stand and listen. Come, answer, where is he? The Emperor is anxious about his health; quick—spit it out!”

The old woman, now white as death, and with her lips quite blue, looked fixedly in the Sergeant's face, but made no reply.

“So you are dumb, mother!—well, we shall find you a tongue. It is your own fault if old Pipriac is severe, mind that; for you have not treated him fairly—you have led him up and down like a fool. Things like that cannot go on for ever; the Emperor has a long nose to scent out deserters. Malediction!” he added, with mock irascibility, “did you think to deceive the Emperor?”

Despite his air of cruelty and brutality,

Pipriac was not altogether bad-hearted, and just then he could not quietly bear the steady reproach of the widow's face, which remained frozen in one terrible look, half agony, half defiance; so there was more pity than unkindness in his heart when he took the basket from her, grumbled a minute over its emptiness, and then, with a comical frown, handed it back. All the time Mother Gwenfern kept silence, with an unearthly expression of pain in her pale grey eyes; and when Pipriac swaggered away at the head of his myrmidons, and women from the village came up garrulously and joined her, she moved on in their midst with scarcely a word. All her soul was busy praying that the good God, who had assisted Rohan so well up to that hour, might still remain his friend, and preserve him again in the hour of his extremity.

Leaving the majority of the stragglers behind them, and accompanied only by Mikel Grallon and a few men and youths of the village, Pipriac and the *gendarmes* pursued their way rapidly along the edges of the

cliffs, now pausing to converse in hurried whispers and to gaze down the great granite precipices which lay beneath their feet, again hurrying on like hounds excited by a fresh scent. The party consisted of some twenty in all, and among them there could be counted no friend to the hunted man ; indeed, who would have dared, in those days of short shrift and speedy doom, to avow friendship for any opponent of that fatal system which Napoleon was building up on the ashes of the Revolution ? In strict truth, there was little or no sympathy for Rohan, now that it was discovered that he still lived ; for the old prejudice against him had arisen tenfold, and not one man there, except perhaps Mikel Grallon, believed he was anything more than a feeble and effeminate coward ; unless, indeed, as Pipriac individually was inclined to affirm, he was simply a dangerous maniac, not properly responsible for his own actions.

Never had the gigantic cliffs and crags, always lonely and terrible, looked so forbidding as on that day ; for the sullen, rayless sunset, and the dead, lifeless calm, deepened

the effect of desolation. Rent as by earthquake and fantastically shaped by the sea, the vast columns and monoliths of crimson granite glimmered beneath like the fragments of some extinct world ; so that walking on the grass above, and peeping dizzily over, one seemed surveying a place of colossal tombs ; and on these tombs the moss and lichen drew their tracery of grey and gold, and out of their niches grew long scrannel grass and rock ferns, and on them, silent, sat the raven and the speckled hawk of the crags, while the face of the cliff far under was still snowed with the darkening legions of the herring-gull.

Whenever old Pipriac looked over, his head, unaccustomed to such depths, went round like a wheel, and he drew back with an expletive. Mikel Grallon, more experienced, took the survey coolly enough, but even he was careful not too approach to near to the edge. Here and there the sides were so worn away that close approach was highly dangerous ; on the very brink the stone had loosened and crumbled down, the rocks were loosening, and the grass was slippery as ice.

Presently Mikel lifted up his hand and called a halt. They were standing on a portion of the cliffs which ran out, by a green ascent, to a sort of promontory.

"Listen," said Mikel. "The Cathedral is right under us, and I will peep over and see if anything is to be seen."

So saying, he cautiously approached the cliff, but when he was within some yards of it, he threw himself upon his stomach and crawled forward upon the ground until his face hung over the edge. He remained so long in this attitude that Pipriac grew impatient, and was growling out a remonstrance, when Mikel turned slowly round, beckoned, and pointed downward. He had gone as white as a sheet.

Instantly, Pipriac and two or three of the *gendarmes* set down their guns, took off their cocked hats, approached, threw themselves on their stomachs, and crawled forward as Mikel Grallon had done.

"Is it he?" growled Pipriac, as he reached the edge.

"Look!" said Mikel Grallon.

In a moment all their heads were hanging over the precipice, and all their faces, eager and open-mouthed, glaring wildly down. At first, all was dizzy and indistinct—a frightful gulf, at the foot of which crawled the sea, too far away for its thunder to be heard ; a gulf across which a solitary seagull flashed now and again, like a flake of wavering snow. Right under them, the precipice yawned inward, so that they hung sheer over the void of air. Beneath them, but some distance to the left, they saw the roofless walls of the Cathedral of St. Gildas stretching right out into the sea ; but these walls, which to one below would seem so gigantic, seemed dwarfed by distance to comparative insignificance, lying as they did far below the heights of the inaccessible crags.

“Where ? where ?” murmured Pipriac, with a face as red as crimson.

“Right under, with his face looking down upon the sea.”

At that moment Rohan Gwenfern, startled by the voice, stirred and gazed up, and all simultaneously uttered a cry. Seen from

above, he seemed of pigmy size, and to be walking on places where there was not foothold for a fly; and the cry that followed, when he staggered and looked up again, was one of horror and amaze.

When Pipriac and the rest crawled back and rose to their feet, every face exhibited consternation; and the voice of Pipriac shook.

"He is the Devil!" said the Sergeant. "No man could walk where he has walked, and not be smashed like an egg."

"It was horrible to look at!" said the *gendarme* Pierre.

"No man can follow him," said André.

"Nonsense," cried Mikel Grallon. "He knows the cliffs better than others, that is all, and he is like a goat on his feet. You can guess now how he saved his neck that night when you fancied he was killed. Well, he will soon be taken, and there will be an end of his pranks."

"We are wasting time," exclaimed Pipriac, who had been glaring with no very amiable light in his one eye at Mikel Grallon. "We

must descend and follow, down the Stairs of St. Triffine; but you four—Nicole, Jàn, Bertran, Hoël—will stay above and keep watch on all we do. But mind, no bloodshed! If he should ascend, take him alive.”

“But if he should resist?” said one of the men.

“Malediction! you are four to one. You others, march! Come, Mikel Grallon!”

Leaving the four men behind, the others hastened on. They had not proceeded far when Pipriac uttered an exclamation and started back; for suddenly, emerging from the gulfs below, a living thing sprang up before them and stood on the very edge of the cliff, gazing at them with large startled eyes. It was Jannedik.

“Mother of God!” cried Pipriac, “my breath is taken away;—yet it is only a goat.”

“It belongs to the mother of the deserter,” said Grallon; “it is a vicious beast, and as cunning as the Black Fiend. I have often longed to cut its throat with my knife, when I have seen Rohan Gwenfern fondling it as if it were a good Christian.”

Having recovered from her first surprise, Jannedik had slowly approached, and passed by the group with supreme unconcern. For a moment she seemed disposed to butt with her horned head at the *gendarmes*, who poked at her grimly with their shining bayonets, but after a moment's reflection over the odds, which were decidedly against her, she gave a scornful toss of her head and walked away.

They had now reached the Ladder of St. Triffine; and, slowly following the steps cut in the solid rock, they descended until they emerged upon the shore. Looking up when they reached the bottom, they saw Jannedik standing far up against the sky, on the very edge of the chasm, and tranquilly gazing down.

By this time it was growing quite dark in the shadow of the cliffs, and wherever they searched, under the eager guidance of Mikel Grallon, they found no traces of the fugitive. Grallon himself, at considerable risk, ascended part of the cliff down the face of which Rohan had so recently descended; but after he had reached a

height of some fifty or sixty feet, he very prudently rejoined his companions on the solid shingle below.

"If one had the feet of a fly," grumbled Pipriac, "one might follow him, but he walks where no man ever walked before."

"He cannot be far away," said Mikel. "Out that way beyond the Cathedral there is no path even for a goat to crawl. It is in the Cathedral we must search, and fortunately the tide has begun to ebb out of the Gate."

Another hour had elapsed, however, before the passage was practicable, and when, wading round the outlying wall which projected into the sea, they passed in under the Gate, the vast place was wrapped in blackness, and the early stars were twinkling above its roofless walls. Even Pipriac, neither by nature nor by education a superstitious man, felt awed and chilled. A dreadful stillness reigned, only broken by the dripping of the water down the sides of the furrowed rocks, by the low eerie cries of seabirds stirring among the crags, by the

rapid whirr of wings passing to and fro in the darkness. Nothing was perceptible ; Night there had completely assumed her throne, and the only lights were the rayless lights of heaven far above. Ranged in rows along the walls sat numbers of cormorants, unseen, but ever and anon fluttering their heavy pinions as the strange footsteps startled them from sleep.

The men spoke in whispers, and crept on timidly.

“ If we had brought a torch ! ” said Pierre.

“ One would say the Devil was here in the darkness,” growled Pipriac.

Mikel Grallon made the sign of the cross.

“ The blessed St. Gildas forbid,” he murmured. “ Hark, what is that ? ”

There was a rush, a whirr overhead, and a flock of doves, emerging from some dark cave, crossed the blue space overhead.

“ It is an accursed spot,” said Pipriac ; “ one cannot see well an inch before one’s nose. Malediction ! one might as well look for a needle in the great sea. If God had made me a goat or an owl I might thrive at

this work, but to grope about in a dungeon is to waste time."

So the retreat was sounded in a whisper, and the party soon retraced their steps from the Cathedral, and were standing in the lighter atmosphere of the neighbouring shore. Total darkness now wrapped the cliffs on every side.

A long parley ensued, throughout which Mikel Grallon protested vehemently that Rohan could not be far away, and that if watch were kept all night he could not possibly escape.

"Otherwise," averred the spy, "he will creep away directly the coast is clear and fly to some other part of the coast. My life upon it, he is even now watching to see us go. If he is to escape, good and well—I say nothing—I have done my duty like a good citizen ; but if he is to be caught you must keep your eyes wide open till day."

In honest truth, Pipriac would gladly have withdrawn for the night and returned to the pursuit in the morning ; for, after all, though he was zealous in his duty, he would just as

soon have given the deserter another chance. Something in Grallon's manner, however, warned him that the man was a spy in more senses than one, and that any want of energy just then, if followed by the escape of Rohan, might be misrepresented at head-quarters. So it was decided that the Cathedral of St. Gildas, with all the circumjacent cliffs, should be kept under surveillance till daybreak. Despatching two more members of his force to join the others on the cliff, and scattering his own force well over the seashore and under the face of the crags, he lit his pipe and proceeded to keep watch.

The night passed quietly enough, despite some false alarms. At last, when every man was savage and wearied out, the dawn came, with a rising wind from the sea and heavy showers of rain. All the villagers, save only Mikel Grallon, had returned to their homes, shrugging their shoulders over what they deemed a veritable wild-goose chase.

Once more, for the tide had again ebbed, Grallon led the way round under the Gate,

and the lone Cathedral echoed with the sound of voices. Great black cormorants were still sitting moveless in the walls; some floundered away to the water with angry wings, but many remained moveless within a few yards of the soldiers' bayonets. All now was bright and visible:—the crimson granite walls stretching out from the mighty cliff, the Gate hung with dripping moss as green as grass, the fantastic niches with their traceries of lichen green and red, the blocks upon the floor like black tombs, slimy with the oozy kisses of the salt tide, and the mighty architraves and minarets far above the roof of the Cathedral, and forming part of the overhanging crag.

The men moved about like pigmies on the shingly floor, searching the nooks and crannies in the walls, prying this way and that way like men very ill-used, but finding no trace of any living thing. At every step he took Pipriac grew more irritated, for he was sorely missing his morning dram of brandy, and the *gendarmes* shared his irritation.

"*Tous les diables !*" he cried, "one might come here hunting for crabs or shell-fish, but I see no hiding-place for anything bigger than a bird. Look you here! The high tide fills this accursed place whenever it enters; there is the mark all round, as high as my hand can reach;—and as for hiding up there in the walls, why only a limpet could do that, for they are as slippery as grass. Malediction! let us depart. There is no deserter here. March!"

"Stay," said Mikel Grallon.

Pipriac turned upon him with a savage scowl.

"Perdition! what next?"

"You have not searched everywhere."

Pipriac uttered an oath; his one eye glittered in a perfect fury.

"You are an ass for your pains! Where else shall we search? Down thy throat, fisherman?"

"No," answered Grallon with a sickly smile; "up yonder!"—and he pointed with his hand.

"Where?"

“Up in the *Trou*!”

The great Altar of the Cathedral, which we have already described to the reader as consisting of a lovely curtain of moss covering the cliff for about fifty square feet, was glimmering with its innumerable jewels of prismatic and ever-changing dew; and just above it was the dark blot on which Marcelle had gazed in terror when she stood before the Altar with Rohan. High as the gallery of some cathedral, the *Trou*, or Cave, out of the heart of which the mystic water flowed, loomed remote, and to all seeming inaccessible. As Pipriac gazed up, a flock of pigeons passed overhead and plunged into the Cave, but instantly emerging again, they scattered swiftly and disappeared over the Cathedral walls.

“Did you mark that?” said Grallon, sinking his voice.

Pipriac, who was gazing up with a disgusted expression, scowled unamiably.

“What, fisherman?”

“The blue doves. They entered the *Trou*,

but no sooner did they disappear than they returned again."

"And then?"

"The Cave is not empty, that is all."

Pipriac uttered an exclamation, and all the men looked in stupefaction at one another, while Grallon smiled complacently and cruelly to himself.

"But it is impossible," exclaimed the Sergeant at last, "Look! The walls are as straight as my hand; and the moss is so slippery and soft that no man could climb; and as to entering from above—why, see how the crags overhang. If he is there, he is the Devil; if he is the Devil, we shall never lay hands upon him. Male-diction!"

It certainly did seem incredible at first sight that any human being could have reached the Cave—if Cave it was—from above or from under, unassisted by a ladder or a rope. Mikel Grallon, however, being well acquainted with the place, soon demonstrated that ascent, though difficult and perilous in the extreme, was not altogether

impossible. In the extreme corner of the Cathedral, close to what we have termed the Altar, the cliff was hard and dry, and here and there were interstices into which a climber might press his hands and feet, and so crawl tediously upward.

"I tell you this," said Mikel whispering, "it can be done, for I have seen the man himself do it. You have but to insert toes and fingers thus"—here he illustrated his words by climbing a few yards—"and up you go."

"Good," said Pipriac grimly; "I see you are a clever fellow, and understand the trick of it. Lead the way, and by the soul of the Emperor we will follow!"

Mikel Grallon grew quite white with annoyance and mortification.

"I tell you he is there."

"And I tell you we will follow if you will show us how to climb. Malediction! do you think old Pipriac is afraid? Come, forward! What, you refuse? Well, I do not blame you; for I have said it, only the Devil could climb there."

Turning to his men, however, he continued in a louder voice—

“Nevertheless, we will astonish the birds. Pierre, take aim at the *Trou* yonder. Fire!”

The *gendarme* levelled his piece at the dark hole far above him and fired. There was a crash, a roar, a murmur of innumerable echoes, and suddenly, overhead, hovered countless gulls, shrieking and flying, attracted by the report. For a moment, it seemed as if the very crags would fall and crush the pigmy shapes below.

“Again!” said Pipriac, signalling to another of his men.

The concussion was repeated; fresh myriads of gulls shut out the sky like a blinding snow, and shrieked their protestations; but there came no other sign.

“One would say the very skies were falling,” growled Pipriac. “Bah! he is not there.”

At that moment, the *gendarmes*, who were still gazing eagerly upward, uttered an exclamation of wonder. A head was thrust out of the *Trou*, and two large eyes were eagerly gazing down.

The exclamation of wonder was speedily followed by one of anger and disappointment; for the head was not that of a human being but that of a goat;—no other, indeed, than our old friend Jannedik, who, with her two fore-feet on the edge of the Cave, and her great grave face gleaming far up in the morning light, seemed quietly demanding the reason of that unmannerly tumult. Mikel Grallon ground his teeth and called a thousand curses on the unfortunate animal, while the *gendarme* Pierre, cocking his piece with a look at his Sergeant, seemed disposed to give Jannedik short shrift.

But Pipriac, with a fierce wave of the hand, bade the *gendarme* desist, and warned his men generally to let Jannedik alone; then turning to Mikel Grallon, he continued sneeringly—

“So this is your deserter, fisherman?—a poor wretch of a goat, with a beard and horns! Did I not say you were an ass for your pains? Malediction! the very beast is laughing at you; I can see the shining of her white teeth.”

"Since the brute is yonder," answered Grallon angrily, "the master is not far away. If we had but a ladder! You would see, you would see!"

"Bah!"

And Pipriac turned his back upon Grallon in disgust, and signalled to his men to depart.

"Then if he escapes, do not say that I am to blame," cried the fisherman, still in a low voice. "I would wager my boat, my nets, all I have, that he hides in yonder, and is afraid to show his face. Is not the goat his, and what is the goat doing up in the *Trou*? Ah, I tell you that you are wrong, Sergeant Pipriac! I have watched for nights and nights, and I know well where he hides. I did not come to you before I had made certain. As sure as I am a living man, as sure as I have a soul to be saved, he is up yonder, up in the *Trou*!"

Despite the intensity and evident honesty of this assertion, Pipriac did not vouchsafe any further reply;—and he and his men had turned their sullen faces towards the Gate,

when a voice far above them said, in low clear tones, which made them start and turn suddenly in a wild amaze—

“Yes, Mikel Grallon, I am here.”





CHAPTER XIV.

A PARLEY.

ALL looked up; and there, standing high above them at the mouth of the Cave, with dishevelled hair and a beard of many weeks' growth, was the man they sought—so worn and torn, so wild and ragged, that only his great stature made him recognisable. The goat had disappeared, either into the Cave or up the face of the cliff, and Rohan stood alone, his whole figure exposed to the view of his pursuers. Standing there in the morning light, with his naked neck and arms, his ruined garments, his uncovered head, his features distorted and full of the quick-panting intensity of a hunted animal, he showed the traces alike of

great mental agony and physical suffering ; but over and beyond its predominant look of pain, his face displayed another passion, akin to hate in its quick and dangerous intensity, and his eyes, which were fixed on the face of Mikel Grallon, burnt with a fierce fire. At first, indeed, it seemed as if he would precipitate himself like an enraged beast prone down upon the spy,—but such an act would have been certain and immediate death, so great was the height at which he stood. He remained at the mouth of the Cave, panting and watching. As to Grallon, he almost crouched in his sudden consternation and fear ; while Pipriac and the *gendarmes* stared up at the vision, too stupefied at first to utter a word.

“Holy Virgin!” cried Pipriac at last, “it is he!”—then he added with a fierce nod and at the pitch of his voice, “So! you are there, *mon garz!*”

Rohan made no reply, but kept his eyes fixed on Mikel Grallon. Pipriac pursued his speech uneasily, like one that felt the awkwardness of the situation.

"We have been waiting a long time, but now we are glad to find you at home. What are you doing up there, so high in the air? *Diable*, one might as well fly like a bird! Well, there is no time to lose, and now that we have found you, you had better come down at once. Come, surrender! In the name of the Emperor!"

At these words the *gendarmes* gripped their guns and fell back in military line, looking up at the *Trou* and ready to fire at the word of command. The situation was an exciting one, but Rohan merely put up his hand to throw back his hair from his eyes, smiled, and waited.

"Come, do you hear?" proceeded Pipriac. "I shall not waste words, mark you, if you delay too long. The game is up;—we have trumped your last card, and you will gain little by stopping up there like a bird on its nest. Descend, Rohan Gwenfern, descend and surrender, that we may lose no time."

The voice of the old martinet rang loudly through the hollow walls of the Cathedral, and died away among the lonely cliffs above.

All below was in shadow, but overhead on the cliff the chill light was gleaming as on a polished mirror, and one lonely sunbeam, severed as it were from its companions, was glimmering right down upon the inaccessible *Trou* and on the figure of Rohan. So the man stood dimly illumed, in all his raggedness and physical desolation; and the light touched his matted golden hair, and stole down and glared upon his feet, which were quite naked.

"What do you want?" he asked in a hollow voice.

The irascible Sergeant shook his fist.

"Want? . . . Hear him! . . . Well, you! *Diable*, have we not been searching up and down the earth until our souls are sick of searching? It is a good joke, to ask what we want; you are laughing at us, fox that you are. Surrender, I repeat! In the name of the Emperor!"

Then, as if carried away by a common inspiration, all the *gendarmes* brandished their weapons, echoing "Surrender!" The Cathedral rang with the cry. After a pause,

the answer came from above, in a low yet clear and decided voice—

“You are wasting your time. I will never be taken alive.”

Pipriac glared up in astonishment; and now, for the first time, Mikel Grallon looked up too, still with sensations the reverse of comfortable, for the figure of the hunted man seemed terrible as that of some wild beast at bay. The black mouth of the Cave was now illuminated, and far overhead clouds of gulls were hovering like flakes of snow in the morning light; but the floor and roofless walls of the Cathedral, never lit unless the sun was straight above them in the zenith, were untouched by the golden gleam.

“No nonsense!” shrieked Pipriac. “Come down! Come, or”—here the speaker glared imbecilely up the inaccessible walls—“or we shall come and take you.”

“Come!” said Rohan.

Pipriac was a man who, although his blustering and savage manners concealed a certain fundamental good-nature, could

never bear to be openly thwarted or placed in a ridiculous position; and now a complication of sentiments made him unusually irritable. In the first place, he would much rather have never discovered the deserter at all; for, after all, he pitied the man and remembered that he was the son of an old friend. Again, he had, he considered, behaved throughout the whole pursuit with extraordinary sympathy and forbearance, and had thereby almost laid himself open to the suspicion of lacking "zeal." Lastly—and this feeling was perhaps the most powerful and predominant at the moment—he had been up all night, without a drop of liquor to wet his lips, and insomuch as that Bardolphian nose of his was a flame that, when not fed with natural stimulants, preyed fiercely on the temper of its owner, he was in no mood to be crossed—especially by one who had so stupidly allowed himself to be discovered. So he took fire instantly at Rohan's taunt, and snatching from one of the *gendarmes* his loaded gun, he cocked it rapidly.

"I will give you one minute," he cried,

"then, if you do not surrender, I shall fire. Do you hear that, deserter? Come, escape is useless—do not be a fool, for I mean what I say; I will pick you off from your perch as if you were a crow." After a pause, he added, "Are you ready? time is up!"

Rohan had not stirred from his position; but now, with a strange smile on his face, he stood looking down at his tormentors. Standing thus, with his tall frame fully exposed, he presented an easy mark for a bullet.

"Once more, are you ready? In the name of the Emperor!"

Rohan replied quietly, without stirring—

"I will never surrender."

In a moment there was a flash, a roar, and Sergeant Pipriac had fired. But when the smoke cleared away they saw Rohan still standing uninjured at the mouth of the Cave, tranquilly looking down as if nothing whatever had occurred. The bullet had struck and been flattened against the rock in his close vicinity, but whether Pipriac had really taken aim at his person, or had

simply fired off the weapon with the view of intimidating him, is a question that cannot easily be answered. If intimidation was his object, he reckoned without his man, for Rohan Gwenfern was the last person in the world to be scared into submission by any such means.

No sooner was it discovered that Pipriac's bullet had missed its mark than all the other *gendarmes* had their weapons cocked and ready to fire also, but the Sergeant immediately interposed, with a savage growl.

"Halt arms! *Tous les diables*, he who fires before I tell him shall smart for his pains;" then, once more addressing Rohan, he cried, "Well, you are still alive! Perhaps, then, after all you will be rational, and come quietly down and trust to the mercy of the Emperor. Look you, I promise nothing, but I will do my best. In any case, you will be done for if you stay up there, for you cannot escape us, that is certain. Now then! I am giving you another chance. Which is it to be?"

"I will never become a soldier."

"It is too late for that," said Mikel Grallon, speaking for the first time and addressing Pipriac. "Besides, look you, he is a coward."

Rohan, who heard every syllable, so clearly and audibly did sound travel among those silent cliffs, gazed down at the spy with a fierce look, and seemed once more prepared to hurl himself bodily from the height where he stood. Recovering himself, he again addressed his speech to Pipriac.

"I tell you, you are wasting time. Perhaps I am a coward, as Mikel Grallon says; but one thing is certain, that I will never go to war, and that I will never give myself up alive."

"Alive or dead, we shall have you—there is no escape."

"Perhaps."

"Up yonder my men are on the watch; this way, that way, all ways, they are posted. Take old Pipriac's word for it, and give in like a sensible man;—you are surrounded."

"That is true."

"Ha ha, then you admit that I am teaching you good sense. Very well! If evil happens,

don't say old Pipriac did not warn you! Come along!"

The answer from above was a quick spasmodic laugh, full of the hollow ring of a bitter and despairing heart. Leaning over from the mouth of the Cave, Rohan pointed quietly out at the Gate of St. Gildas, saying—

"If I am surrounded, so are you. Look!"

Pipriac turned involuntarily, as did all the other members of the group. The first man to understand the true position of affairs was Mikel Grallon, who, the moment his eyes glanced through the Gate, uttered the exclamation—

"Holy Virgin, he is right—it is the tide!"

Sure enough, the sea had turned and was foaming whitely just beyond the Gate. A few minutes more, and it would enter the Cathedral, when retreat would be impossible. Grallon rushed towards the Gate, crying "Follow! there is not a moment to lose;" but Pipriac, who, though irascible under slight provocation, never lost his head in an emergency, stood his ground and looked up

at the Cave. Rohan, however, was no longer visible.

“*Diable !*” cried the Sergeant, shaking his fist up at the spot where the deserter had just been standing. “Never mind ! Give him a volley !”

In a moment the *gendarmes* had discharged their pieces right into the mouth of the Cave; there was a horrible concussion, and thunder reverberating far up among the cliffs. Then all fled for their lives.

They were just in time ; but passing round the point of land which led to the safe shingle beyond the Cathedral, they had to wade to the waist, for it was a high spring tide. The retreat was decidedly ignominious, and little calculated to improve the temper of Pipriac and his troop. Coming round to the dry land immediately under the Ladder of St. Triffine, they found a great gathering from the village, men and women, young and old, waiting, chattering, wondering. Among them were Alain and Jannick Derval, with their sister Marcelle.

The horrible fascination to see and know the worst had been too great for Marcelle to resist, and she had been drawn thither with the rest, almost against her will. Descending the Ladder, she had found the tide rising round the point which led to the Cathedral, and had crouched down, wildly listening, when the reports from the neighbouring Gate broke upon her ear. What could those shots mean? Had they discovered him—was he fighting for his life, and were they shooting him down? Her face grew like a murdered woman's as she waited, with the hum of voices around her sounding as in a dream. Then as the *gendarmes* appeared wading round to shore with shouldered muskets, she had sprung to her feet, eagerly perusing their faces as they came. Others flocked eagerly around them too, with eager questions. But Pipriac, cursing not loud but deep, pushed his way through the crowd followed by his men, neither of whom uttered a word.

Mikel Grallon was following when he felt his arm fiercely seized; he was about to shake off the offending grip, when turning slightly, he recognized Marcelle.

"Speak, Mikel Grallon!" said the girl, her large eyes burning with an unnatural light. "What have they done? Have they found him? Is he killed?"

Honest Mikel shook his head, with what was meant to be a reassuring smile.

"He is safe—yonder in the Cathedral of St. Gildas."

"In the Cathedral?"

"Up in the *Trou*!"

There was a general murmur, for, although the words were specially addressed to Marcelle, an eager throng had caught the news. Marcelle released her spasmodic hold, and Grallon passed on up to the shore, rejoining Pipriac and his satellites, who stood consulting together in a group.

And now, like a fountain that is suddenly unfrozen from its prison in the ground, the long-suppressed love of Marcelle Derval rose murmuring within her heart. All things were forgotten save that Rohan lived, and that he was engaged against overwhelming odds in a frightful fight for life; not even the Emperor was remembered, nor the fact that it

was against the Emperor that Rohan stood in revolt ; it was enough for the time being to feel that Rohan had arisen, and with him her old passionate dream. Only a few hours before she had moved about like a shadow, certain of nothing save of a great void within her soul, of a great unutterable loss and pain ; then had come Mikel Grallon's discovery—then the sound of the hue and cry ; so that, indeed, she had scarcely had time to collect her thoughts rightly and to look her fate in the face. Despair had been easy ; hope, the faint wild hope that had now come, was not so easy. She had kept still and dead amid the frost of her great grief, but when the light came, and the winds and rains were loosened, she bent like a tree before the storm.

Not without pride did she now remember her lover's strength, and observe how it had hitherto conquered and been successful. He was there, unarmed, within a little distance, and yet he had escaped his enemies again, as he had often escaped them before ; indeed, there seemed a charm upon his life, and perhaps the good God loved him after all !

Gradually, from group to group, the intelligence spread that Rohan Gwenfern had ensconced himself up in the *Trou à Gildas*, the black and terrible abyss into which few feet save his own had ever passed ; and that there, night after night, he hid alone, communing perhaps with ghastly spirits of the darkness. For the place, all folk knew, was haunted, and few men there would have cared to pass along that strange Cathedral-floor at dead of night. Did not the phantoms of the evil monks still wander, moaning for mercy to the pitiless Saint who cast them into eternal chains ? Had not the awful Saint himself been seen, again and again, holding spectral vigil, while the seals came creeping about his knees, and the great cormorants sat gazing silently at him from the dripping walls ? The place was terrible, curst for the living till endless time. He who lingered there safely must either have made an unholy pact with the Prince of Evil, or be under the special protection of the Saint of God.

As to this last point, opinion was divided.

A few grim pessimists held firmly that Rohan had sold himself body and soul to "Master Roberd," who, in his turn, had carried him safely through so many dangers, and was now watching over him carefully in his "devil's nest," up in the *Trou*. The majority, however, were inclined to think that a good Spirit, not a bad, had taken the matter in hand, and that this good Spirit might be the blessed St. Gildas himself. There was a strong undercurrent of anti-Imperial feeling, which speedily resolved itself into an unmistakable sympathy with the deserter, and a belief that he was under Divine protection.

After a rapid consultation with his subordinates Pipriac determined to despatch a messenger to St. Gurlott for more assistance, and meantime to keep a careful watch from every side on the now inundated Cathedral. Of one thing he was assured, that escape out of the Cave was impossible, so long as the cliffs above and the shore below were carefully guarded. There was no secret way which the fugitive might take; he must

either, at the almost certain risk of life, creep right upward along the nearly inaccessible face of the crag, or he must swim out to sea, or he must pass round to the shore by the way the others had gone and come. Further away in the direction of the village, a great precipitous headland projected, surrounded on every side and at all tides by the sea, and quite impassable.

“He is in the trap,” growled Pipriac, “and only God or the Devil can get him out !”





CHAPTER XV.

IN THE CAVE.

WHILE his pursuers were speculating and deliberating, Rohan Gwen-fern waited solitary up in his hiding-place, making no attempt at flight ; which, indeed, he well knew to be at present impossible. Now and then he listened, but the only sound he heard was the sea creeping in and covering the vast Cathedral-floor. He was safe, at least for the time being, since the waters washed below and no human feet could reach him from above.

He lay within a vast natural cave, hewn in the very heart of the granite crags, and dimly lit by the rays that crept in by its narrow

mouth, or *Trou*. Great elliptic arches, strangely hung with purple moss and soot-black fungi, loomed overhead, while on every side down the lichen-covered walls sparkled a dewy fretwork resembling that external curtain of glittering mosaic which we have called the "Altar." The place was vast and shadowy as the vault of some cathedral built by hands, so that one could not well discern its exact extent; and here and there its walls were gashed with streams of water, falling down and stretching out into blackest pools. The air was damp and cold, and would have been fatal to one of tender frame; but Rohan breathed it with the comfort of a hardy animal. In a corner of the Cave he had strewn a thick bed of dried seaweed, on which he was lying. By his side, and near to his hand, were his fowler's staff, a pair of sabots, and part of a black loaf; while in a fissure of the wall above his bed was fixed a small rude lamp of tin.

Here, in complete solitude, and often in total darkness, he had passed many a night, and whether it was calm or storm he had

slept sound. He was well used to such haunts, and his powerful physique was in no way affected by the exposure—indeed, had it not been for the constant anxiety of mind created by his horrible situation, he might have remained entirely unchanged. But even animals, however vigorous by nature, will waste away to skin and bone under the strain of perpetual fear and persecution; and so Rohan had grown into the shadow of his former self—a gaunt, forlorn-looking, hunted man, with large eyes looking out of a face pale with unutterable pain. His garments, not new when he first took flight, had turned into sorry rags, through which gleamed the naked flesh; his hair fell below his shoulders in a wild and matted mass; his beard and moustache had grown profusely; and upon his arms and limbs were cuts and bruises left by dangerous falls. One foot was swollen and partly useless—a fact over which his pursuers would have gloated—for it left him practically in their power, and less able than usual to pursue his usual flights among the cliffs, even had an opportunity offered.

Mikel Grallon had suspected shrewdly when he guessed that Rohan owed his daily subsistence to the secret help of his infirm mother. Twice or thrice weekly Mother Gwenfern had come secretly to the neighbourhood, bearing with her such provisions as she was able to prepare with her own hands; these she had secretly given to her son, or placed them with preconcerted signals on the places she knew him to frequent, or even (as we have seen on one occasion) let them right down to his hiding-place from the top of the cliffs. Without this assistance the man would necessarily have starved, for it was physically impossible to exist solely on the shell-fish and dulse which he was in the habit of gathering from the sea.

He was not now alone in the Cave. The goat Jannedik was perambulating uneasily to and fro, carefully keeping at a distance from the mouth, through which so alarming a volley had lately been raining. From time to time she came up close, and rubbed her head into his hand, as if soliciting an explanation of the extraordinary scene which had just taken place.

The visits of Jannedik to her master's hiding-place had been erratic. She had first discovered him by accident, while roaming at random, as was her custom, among the cliffs; then, once acquainted with his haunts, she had come again; and now seldom a day passed without a visit from her, however brief. Her coming and going soon became an exciting event, for when she appeared Rohan did not feel altogether without companionship, and she had strange wild ways to soothe a human heart. Nor was this all. Many a secret communication had been concealed about the goat's thick coat, and borne from the fugitive to his mother in her cottage.

More than an hour had passed since Pipriac and the rest had fled from the Cathedral, when Rohan rose from his seat and passed out again into the open air at the cavern's mouth. All was perfectly still; the green water filled the floor of the Cathedral, covering all its weedy tombs, and a seal was swimming round and round, seeking in vain to find a landing-place along the walls.

Standing up there, he felt like one suspended between water and sky.

So far there had been a certain fierce satisfaction in resisting what so many living men deemed the Irresistible. Weak and single-handed as he was, he had stood up in revolt against the Emperor—had openly and unhesitatingly defied him and abjured him—had conjured up on his behalf all the power and elements of Nature—had cried to the Earth, "Hide me!" and to the Sea, "Protect me!" and had not cried in vain. True, he had suffered in the struggle, as all that revolt must suffer; but so far no specially evil consequence, apart from his own unpleasant experiences, had ensued from the attitude he had taken. He had certainly obeyed the behest of his conscience, and that to him, then, and thenceforth for ever, was the veritable voice of God.

In those hours of dark extremity Marcelle Derval was to him both an anguish and a consolation: an anguish, because he feared that she loved him no longer, that her sympathy was with his enemies, that she

believed him to be a renegade from a good cause, a traitor, and a coward—a consolation, because he remembered all that she had been to him, and because, night after night, passionate and loving as of old, she came to him in dreams. Many a lonely hour, when no soul was near, he had lingered in the centre of the Cathedral, going over in his mind all the details of that divine day when first he clasped her in his arms and felt her virgin kiss upon his mouth.

“Solitude to him
Was sweet society,”

when he had for companionship her quiet image. He saw her then as a little child, walking with him hand in hand along the sands of the village; or, as a happy girl, climbing with him the lonely crags, and watching him as he gathered cliff-flowers and sea-birds' eggs; or, as a holy maiden, kneeling by his side before the altar of the little chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde. Such happy memories are consecrated gleams, which make this low earth Heaven.

Yet he had lost her, that was clear; he had

chosen his lot with the outcasts of the earth, with those Esaus who refuse to acquiesce in the accepted jurisdiction of the world, and who map out a perilous existence for themselves at the cost of family, caste, peace of body and mind, sympathy, and social honour. He might as well—(nay, far better from this mundane point of view)—have denied his God as have denied his Emperor; for the Emperor seemed omnipotent, while God remained so acquiescent in evil, and so far away. Faith in the divine order of things had long forsaken him. His only reliance now was on Nature, and on his own heart; for if the worst came to the worst, he could die.

With every hour and every day that he brooded thus his hate of War grew deeper, the justification of his resistance seemed more absolute. Even if safe submission had then been possible, on the condition that he recanted and joined the great army that did Napoleon's will, he would have resisted with even more tenacity than at the first, for he was a man in whom ideas grow and multiply

themselves, and become sinews of strength to the secret will. With his moral certainty deepened his physical horror. In the darkness of that lonely Cave he had conjured up such Phantoms of the battle-field as might fitly people the blood-red fields of Hell ; all that he had read, all that he had fancied and feared, took tangible shapes, and moved to and fro along those sunless walls ; ghastly spectres and adumbrations of an all too horrible reality, they came there from time to time, paralyzing his heart with despair and fear.

So that, after all, if we must have it so, he was in a certain sense of the word a Coward, capable of the nervous prostration cowards feel. He had senses over keen and subtle, and could detect even there in his Cave the fatal scent which is found in slaughter-houses where cattle are slain, and on battle-fields where men are butchered ; he could hear the cry of the stricken, hold the cold hand of the dead ; he was conscious of the widow weeping and the orphan wailing ; and he beheld the burning trail which the

War-Serpent left wherever it crawled, the blood and tears which fell to earth, the fire and smoke which rose to heaven. With more than a poet's vision—with the conjuration of a vivid imagination stirred by deep personal dread—he could *see* and *hear* these things. Each man bears his own Inferno within his breast; and these were Rohan Gwennifer's.

In due time the tide, which had risen high up the walls of the Cathedral, and was shining smooth as glass and green as malachite, began to ebb out through the Gate. Rohan stood watching it from the *Trou*, while gradually it sank lower and lower, till a man might have waded waist-deep on the shingly floor. Gradually the great weed-covered boulders and granite slabs became visible, and a certain space immediately under the Cave was left quite dry. Standing thus, Rohan calculated his chances. Ascent was certainly possible, though difficult in the extreme, and beyond measure dangerous: impossible certainly to a man encumbered by arms or any

heavy weapon. Nor could more than one man approach at a time, that was certain. In a word, Rohan's position was virtually impregnable, so long as he kept upon the watch.

Just then Jannedik came out from the Cave, and began quietly to walk upwards. Her path was easy for some distance, being the same path by which Rohan had lately descended, but when she had passed a certain point she became as a fly walking up a perpendicular wall. At last, without once slipping a foot, she disappeared; like a bird fading away into the skies.

Which skies had darkened again, and were blurred with a dark mist. The rain, blown in from the sea, was beating pitilessly against the face of the cliffs, deepening to moist purple their granite stains, and lighting up liquid gleams in their grassy fissures. It fell now heavily on Rohan, but he scarcely heeded it: he was water-proof; besides it was warm rain, such as steals sweet scent from the boughs in autumn woods and lanes.

Slowly, calmly, quite sheltered from the wet wind which blew without, the sea ebbed

from the Cathedral, until at last it all disappeared through the Gate, and only the glistening walls and shingle showed that it had been lately there. The sea washed, and the rain fell, and the wind moaned, while Rohan stood waiting and watching. Presently he heard another sound, faintly wafted to him through the Gate. Human voices! His pursuers were returning.

As the sounds came nearer and nearer, he quietly withdrew into the Cave.

Pipriac and the *gendarmes* did not return alone; besides Mikel Grallon, there came a swarm of villagers, men and women, excited and expectant. From time to time the Sergeant turned upon them and drove them back with oaths, but, after retreating a few yards, they invariably drew nigh once more. Pipriac could do nothing, for he was in a minority, and they numbered three or four score; and so now, when he re-entered the Cathedral with his men, the crowd, chattering and pointing, blocked up the Gate and partially filled the Cathedral.

From the darkness of his Cave, Rohan, himself unseen, could behold this picture ; leaning forward to the *Trou*, but keeping well in darkness, he looked down upon the pigmy shapes below him,—first, Pipriac and the others, crawling up towards the “Altar” like so many dwarfs, their bayonets glittering, their voices muttering, —then the villagers in their quaint dresses of many colours, gazing up in wonder and tremulous anticipation. Suddenly his heart leapt within him and he grew ghastly pale ; for behold, standing apart, some yards in front of the group from the village, he recognized Marcelle, quietly looking upward. He could see her pale face set in its saffron coif, he could feel the light of her large upturned eyes. What had brought her there ? Ah, God, was *she* leagued against him with his persecutors ? Had she come to behold his misfortune and degradation, perhaps his death ? Sick with such thoughts, he strained his painful sight upon her, forgetting all else in the intensity of his excitement. So a wild animal gazes from

its lair when the cruel hunters are close at hand.

And now, O Pipriac, to business ; for ye are many against one, and the Emperor is impatient to settle the affair of this revolter, that of him may be made a terror and a shining example to all the flock ! Fetch him down, O Pipriac, from his hiding-place : draw the fox from his hole into full day ; spare not, but take him alive, with a view to full and proper retribution ! It is useless, indeed, to stand here with thy myrmidons, with so many gaping throats, staring up, as if the deserter would drop into thy mouth !

Yet this is exactly what Pipriac is doing, and, indeed, the more he stares and gapes the more puzzled does he become. If one were a bird or a fly, yea, or a snail, one might climb up yonder to the Cave, but being a man, and moreover a man not too steady on the legs, Pipriac justly deems the feat impossible ; nevertheless, he suggests to this comrade and to that, and notably to Mikel Grallon, the performance of that forlorn hope ; with not much result, save

grumbling refusals and mutinous looks. Meantime, he grows savage, for he believes the villagers are laughing at his discomfiture, and, finding deeds impossible, again has recourse to words.

"What ho, deserter! Listen! Are you here? *Diable*, do you hear me? Attend!"

There is no answer save the echoes reverberating from cliff to cliff.

"Malediction!" cries the Sergeant. "If he should be gone."

"That is impossible," said Mikel Grallon. "Unless he is a ghost, he is still there."

"And who the devil says he is *not* a ghost?" snarls Pipriac. "Fisherman, you are an ass—stand back! If we had but a ladder, we would do; malediction! if we had only a ladder." And he shrieked aloud again at the top of his voice, "Deserter! Number one! Rohan Gwenfern!"

But there was no answer whatever, no stir, no sound. The villagers looked at one another and smiled, while Marcelle crossed herself and prayed.



CHAPTER XVI.

A SIEGE IN MINIATURE.

IT is necessary to be precise as to the date of these occurrences. When the fishermen beheld that memorable midnight vision in the Cathedral, and mistook for St. Gildas and the Fiend the living shapes of Rohan and Jannedik the goat, it was just after the June festival. Many weeks had elapsed while Mikel Grallon was secretly upon the scent of the fugitive; but nearly three entire months had passed away before he actually discovered the whole truth that Rohan lived and was hiding in the great Cathedral. So that it was now the end of September, 1813.

A memorable time, out in the great storm-beaten world, as well as here in lonely Kromlaix; other tides were turning besides that which comes and goes with weary iteration on the sea-shore; stranger storms were gathering than any little Kromlaix knew: nay, *had* gathered, and were bursting now around the figure of the one Colossus who bestrode the world. On the Rhine had Napoleon paused, facing the multitudinous waves of avenging hosts; had lifted up his finger, like King Canute of old, crying "Thus far and no farther!"—yet to his wonder the waves still roared, and the tide still rose, and the living waters were now washing blood-red about his feet. Would he be submerged? Would his evil genius fail him at last? These were the supreme questions of Autumn, 1813. All the World was against him; nay, the World and the Sea and the Sky; yet he had tamed all these before, and might again; and his word was still a power to conjure with, his presence still an inspiration, his shadow still a portent and a doom. He might emerge; and then?

Why, there was little left for the stabbed and bleeding Earth but to die; for, alas! she could bear no more.

Our business is not yet with the movement of great armies, with the motion of those elemental forces against which the Avatar was then struggling; our picture is to contain the microcosm, not the macrocosm; yet the one is potential in the other, as one monera of Haeckel represents the aggregate of a million moneras visibly covering the seabottom but germinated from one invisible speck. No human pen, piling horror upon horror, can represent the aggregate of war; it can only catalogue individual agonies, each of which brings the truth nearer home than any number of generalities. And we, who are about to chronicle to the best of our power a siege in miniature, begin by affirming that it represents the spirit of all sieges, however colossal in scale, however aggrandised by endless combinations of the infinitesimal.

Here in Kromlaix the matter is simple enough—it is one man against many; up till now it has been bloodless, and so far as

the one man himself is concerned it may remain so till the end.

And now, O Muse, for a pen of fire to chronicle the doings of Pipriac the indomitable, as at last, with fiery Bardolphian nose lifted in the air, he collects his martial forces together! Small pity now is left in his heart for the creature whom he pursues; all his fierce passions are aroused, and his only aspiration is for cruel victory; his voice is choked, his eyes are dim with rage and bloodthirst. He, Pipriac, commissary and representative of the Emperor, to be defied and held at bay by a single peasant, crouching unarmed like a fox in a hole!—by a miserable deserter, who has openly refused to fight for his country, who is a *chouan* and a coward, with a price upon his head! It is utterly incredible, and not to be endured. Up, some of you, and drag him down! André, Pierre, Hoël, climb! *Tous les diables*, is there not a man among you—not a creature with the heart of a fly? Ha, if Pipriac were not old, if his legs were not shaky, would

he not read you a lesson, rogues that you are !

Stimulated by the curses of his superior, Pierre takes off his shoes, puts his bayonet between his teeth, and begins to climb ; the rocks are perpendicular and slippery, but there are crevices for the hands and feet. Pierre makes way, watched eagerly by all the others ; suddenly, however, his foot slips and down he comes with a groan. Fortunately, he had not gone far, and beyond a few bruises he is little hurt.

Now it is André's turn ; André, a dark, beetle-browed, determined-looking dog, with powerful legs and sinewy hands. He makes even better way than Pierre ; foot by foot, bayonet between teeth, he goes up : there is not a word, there is scarcely a breath ; he is half-way, clinging to the treacherous rocks with fingers and toes like a cat's claws, and wearing a cat-like determination in his face, when suddenly one utters a cry, and points up. André looks up too, and there, stretched out above him, are two hands, and in those two hands, poised, an enormous

fragment of rock. A white murderous face glares over at him—the face of Rohan Gwenfern.

It would be easy now to pick off the deserter, but if this were done, what of André?—down would descend the stone, and woe to him who clung below. André does the best he can under the circumstances: he descends hand over hand, more rapidly than he ascended. By the time that he drops again upon the shingle the face and arms above are gone.

“Malediction,” cries Pipriac, “then he means to fight!”

Yes, Pipriac, make sure of that; for is it not written that the very worm will turn, and that even innocent things become terrible when they struggle for sweet life? Nor shall this man be blamed if he becomes what you make him,—a murderous and murdering animal, with all the gentle love and pity burnt up within his veins,—and with one thought uppermost only, that of overthrowing and destroying those who would overthrow and destroy him,—which

thought may in due time be kindled to fiercer bloodthirst and more hideous hunger for vengeance. In every strong man's heart there is a devil ; beware how you rouse it *here !*

Another volley into the mouth of the Cave, given furiously at a signal from the Sergeant, is only waste of ammunition. The bullets patter on the top of the *Trou*, and fall down flattened on the spot where Rohan lately stood. The cliffs roar, the villagers utter a terrified murmur ; then there is silence.

Other attempts to climb follow, all without success. Once the poised rock descends, and André, who was climbing again, only just drops to the earth and draws aside in time. Curses and threats rise to the Cave ; Pipriac utters horrible imprecations. Shots are fired again and again ; but all miss their mark, for Rohan now is upon his guard. The siege has begun in earnest.

Sunset comes, and nothing has been done ; the situation seems actually unassailable. The rain has been falling more or less all day, and every man is wet through and out

of temper. The crowd of villagers, with Marcelle among them, still looks on, in stupefied content that the *gendarmes* are baffled at every turn.

Now the tide creeps up to the Gate once more, and all precipitately retreat, the military with an *au revoir* of threats and objurgations. The great Cathedral is empty, all is silent. But who is this that, lingering behind the rest, creeps up close under the "Altar," turns her white face upward, and moans out the deserter's name.

"Rohan! Rohan!"

There is no reply; she stands uplifting her arms, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Rohan! speak to me! Ah, God, can you not hear?"

Still there is silence, and, turning sadly, she walks down the dark Cathedral and follows the rest out of the Gate. She is in time, but at the promontory the water is knee-deep as she wades round.

Yes, he had heard; lying in there upon his bed of weeds, he had heard the voice, and

peering down, himself in darkness, he had seen the piteous face he loved, looking upward. He had no heart to answer; her face shook his soul more painfully than even those fierce faces of his enemies; but the excitement of the day had made him mad, suspicious, and distrustful even of her. He saw her pass away after the rest; he gazed after her with a dull, dumb despair, like one in a dream; then, when she had gone, he threw himself down upon his bed and wept.

Ah, those tears of a strong man!—wrung like drops from stone, like moisture from iron; shed not for sorrow, not in self-pity, but in pure surcease of heart. With the apparition of that face came upon him the consciousness of all that he had lost, of all the love and peace that he had nearly won: the certainty of what he was now, who had once been so strong and glad; the knowledge of his almost certain doom, for was not the fatal mark already upon his forehead? “*Marcelle! Marcelle!*” The name went up unto the hollows of the Cave, and voices answered him like cries from his own heart,

and all his force was broken. So night came, and found him wearied out.

All that night he was left in peace, but he knew well that close watch was kept without the Cathedral; in no case would he have stirred, for no other place was so safe, and his foot was still in pain. He rested in the total darkness, without a light of any kind; he heard the pigeons come in to their roosts in the rocks, and he saw the bats slip in and out against the dim blue gleam at the Cave's mouth; and harmless living creatures crawled over him as he lay. About midnight, when the tide was ebbing, he waited expectant; but no one returned. A cold moon rose, flooding the Cathedral with her beams, and shining far out with one silvery track upon the sea.

It was then that he first bestirred himself and laboured in preparation for his enemies. Scattered on the floor of the Cave were many loose pieces of rock, both huge and small, which in course of time had detached themselves from the cliffs; these he carefully carried to the mouth of the Cave, piling

them one upon another in readiness to be cast over on any assailant who might climb from below; lifting some, rolling others; now and then involuntarily letting one slip from his aching hold, and crash down on the beach below. For hours he laboured, for it was no easy task; some of the stones being heavy enough, falling from that height, to crush an ox. When he had done, his hands were bleeding, cut by the sharp edges of the stones. Finally, when the tide crept into the place once more, he threw himself on his bed and slept.

When he awoke it was broad day—the mouth of the Cave was bright, and a confused murmur broke upon his ear. He started up and listened. A loud authoritative voice was calling him by name. Crawling forward to the mouth of the Cave, now partially blocked up by the rocks and stones, he peered cautiously over, and saw, standing on the shingle below him, a crowd of men, almost all of whom wore uniform and carried bayonets; while in their midst, calling

out his name, was a tall grey-headed man in semi-military dress, whom he recognized as the Mayor of St. Gurlott.

Again, the Mayor, holding a paper in his hand, called his name aloud. After a moment's hesitation, he answered, "I am here!" There was a babble of voices, a flashing of weapons; then the Mayor said again—

"Silence!—Gwenfern, are you attending?"

"Yes."

"Do you know me?"

"Yes."

The answers were given distinctly, but Rohan was careful to keep his person totally concealed.

"You were drawn for the Conscription in the early summer, and your name was first upon the list. Wretched man, you are at last discovered, as every one will be who deserts his country in the hour of need; there is no longer any chance of escape; why do you still persist in a miserable resistance? In the name of the Emperor, I bid you yield yourself up."

No answer.

"Do you hear me? Are you still refractory? Have you not one word to say for yourself? None?"

After a moment's pause, the voice from the Cave replied—

"Yes, one."

"Speak, then!"

"If I surrender as you desire, what then?"

The Mayor shrugged his shoulders.

"You will be *shot*, of course, as a warning to others."

"And if I refuse?"

"Why, then, you will die too, but like a dog. There is but one law for deserters—one law and short shrift. Now, do you understand?"

"I understand."

"And to save trouble, will you surrender?"

"Not while I live."

The Mayor, folding up his paper, handed it to Sergeant Pipriac with an air that said "I have done my duty, and wash my hands of the whole affair." A long colloquy ensued, at the end of which the Mayor said, frowning—

"The rest is in your hands, and should be easy; he is only one man, while you are many. I leave it to you, Sergeant Pipriac—he must be taken, dead or alive."

"That is more easily said than done," said Pipriac; "it is more than a man's life is worth to climb up there; and besides, without ladders only one man could ascend at a time."

The Mayor mused; he was a grim, pale-looking man, with cruel grey eyes and pitiless mouth.

"The example is a dangerous one, Sergeant Pipriac; at all risks he must be reached. Are there no ladders in the village?"

"Ah, m'sieu," returned Pipriac, "just cast your eye up at the *Trou*; it would be a long ladder indeed to reach so far, and even then——"

At this moment Mikel Grallon, hat in hand, approached the Mayor as if to speak.

"*M'sieu le Maire.*"

"What man is this?" asked the Mayor, scowling.

"This is the man who first gave information," said Pipriac.

"Stand back, fisherman! What do you want?"

Mikel Grallon, instead of falling back, came closer, and said in a low voice—

"Pardon, *M'sieu le Maire*, but there is one way if all the rest fail——"

"Well?"

"The deserter is without means of subsistence. If the worst come to the worst, he must starve to death."





CHAPTER XVII.

HUNGER AND COLD.

MIKEL GRALLON, with characteristic and cruel foresight, had hit upon the truth: that however successful Rohan Gwenfern might be in keeping his assailants at bay from his seemingly impregnable position, he must inevitably, unless provisioned for a period which was altogether unlikely, either yield himself up, or famish and die. To secure this latter end it was necessary carefully to cut off all avenues of supply, which, indeed, Pipriac had already done, every portion of the cliffs, both above and below, being well watched and guarded; and now the only

question was whether to try at once to take the position by storm, or to wait patiently until such time as the deserter either capitulated or perished of starvation. Pipriac, being a man of action, was for an immediate attack; with which view he sent messengers to scour the village for ladders of some sort; but when these messengers returned empty-handed, after searching high and low, he saw the hopelessness of rapid attack, and determined to conduct the siege passively until such time as capitulation came. It should never be said that old Pipriac was baffled and defied by a peasant, smiling as it were within a stone's-throw of his hand. *Tous les diables*, duty was duty, and it should be done though it took him a score of years!

In the mean time, however, he sent to St. Gurlott for ladders, which might be useful sooner or later, if not for reaching the deserter alive, at least for recovering his dead body. Then, pending their arrival, he sat down, like a mighty general with his army surrrounding a beleaguered town, before the *Trou à Gildas*.

Figuratively, not literally ; for the constant ebbing and flowing of the tide left the Cathedral quite out of the question for head quarters ; and, moreover, it was necessary for Pipriac to pass to and fro, inspiring and directing his men, both those stationed on the high cliffs and those below.

A day and a night passed ; and the prisoner made no sign.

It would be tedious to describe the various harmless sallies of the besiegers. At every *morte mer* they watched the Cave and reconnoitred, but saw nothing of the besieged ; sometimes they called aloud upon him, at others they crept in and crept out in silence. All the night double watch was kept, not one avenue of escape being overlooked ; and, to make assurance doubly sure, Pipriac refused to let any villager, man or woman, approach the scene of the siege. Twice Marcelle Derval was driven back, almost at bayonet-point, for the men were growing savage through sheer impatience. What her errand was none knew ; but one suspected : that it was to carry the deserter bread.

On the morning of the second day the sea rose high, and the wind blew boisterously from the south-east ; by noon the wind had risen to a storm ; before night it was blowing a gale, with heavy blinding rain. For two days and nights more the storm continued, growing fiercer and fiercer, on the land and on the sea : the great cliffs shook, the cormorants sat half-starving in their ledges looking at the raging sea. The *gendarmes* kept their posts, relieving each other at regular intervals. The sentinels bore lanterns, which were flashed full all night upon the cliffs in the neighbourhood of the Cave.

In the tumult of these tempestuous nights Rohan might possibly have escaped, but he did not try : out in the open country he would have soon been taken, and he knew no "coign of vantage" equal to the position he occupied. Twice, at considerable peril, he made his way in the darkness up the cliff to the spot where he had been discovered by Mikel Grallon and the rest ; and on the second occasion a hand from above, as before,

let him down food—black bread and coarse cheese. So he did not starve—yet.

And now the storm abated, and calm days came, and nights with a bright moon. The besiegers made no attempt to reach him ; they had clearly determined on starving him out.

On the fifth night from the commencement of the siege the besiegers made a discovery. The sentinels on the crags above, as they stood 'twixt sleeping and waking at their posts, saw a dark figure creeping, almost crawling, on the edges of the crags ; sometimes it paused and lay quite still, at others it almost ran ; and at first they crossed themselves superstitiously, for they deemed it something unearthly. There was a moon, but from time to time her light was buried in dense clouds. Now, whenever the moonlight shone out, the figure lay still ; whenever all became dark it again moved forward.

One *gendarme*, separating himself from his fellows, followed on his hands and knees—moved when the figure moved—paused when the figure paused—and at last, with a power-

ful effort of the will—for he had his superstitions—sprang forward, siezed the figure—and found it flesh and blood.

Then the others, running up with lanterns, flashed them in the pale face of a woman, who uttered a loud wail: Mother Gwenfern.

Her errand was instantly discovered; she carried food, which she was obviously about to convey to her son by means of a hempen cord, which they also found upon her person. It was a pitiful business, and some there would fain have washed their hands of it; but the more brutal ones, faithful to their duty, drove the old woman back to her cottage at the bayonet point. From that time forth a still closer watch was kept, so that no soul could possibly have left the village and approached the great cliff-wall unseen.

“ He will die ! ”

“ Mother, he shall not die ! ”

“ There is no hope—there is no way; ah, my curse on Pipriac, and on them all ! ”

“ Pray to the good God ! He will direct us ! ”

“Why should I pray? God is against us, God and the Emperor; my boy will die, my boy will die!”

It was evening; and the two women—Mother Gwenfern and Marcelle—sat alone together in the widow’s cottage, clinging together and crying in despair; for the widow’s last attempt to send succour to her son had failed, and now her very door was watched by cruel eyes. Ah, it was terrible! to think that the son of her womb was out yonder starving in the night, that he had not tasted bread for many hours, that she was powerless to stir to help him any more! What she had previously been able to convey to him had been barely sufficient to support life, yet it had sufficed; but *now*!—a whole day and night had passed since she had vainly tried to reach him and had been discovered in the attempt. Merciful God! to think of the darkness, and the cold, and the dreary solitude of the Cave; and then, to crown all, the hunger!

The agony of those months of horror had left their mark on the weary woman; gaunter

and more grim than ever, a skeleton only sustained by the intensity of the maternal fire that burnt within her, she waited and watched: that ominous blue colour of the lips often proclaiming the secret disease that preyed within. Her comfort in those desolate hours had been Marcelle, who, with a daughter's love and more than a daughter's duty, had watched over her and helped her in her holy struggle.

Come back to the Cathedral of St. Gildas. It is night, the tide is full, and the moon is shining on the watery floor. Far above on the cliffs the sentinels are watching; on the shores around they are scattered, standing or lying; Pipriac is not with them, but he, too, wherever he is, is on the *qui vive*. All is still and calm: stillest of all that white face gazing seaward out of the Cave.

The pinch has come at last, the cruel pinch and pang which no strength of will can subdue, which nothing but bread can appease. Last night Rohan Gwenfern ate his last crust; then, climbing up to the old spot,

watched for the old signal, as he had watched the night before, in vain. When food *had* come he had husbanded it with care—only partaking of just enough to support simple life, dividing the rest into portions for the future hours; but he had come to the end at last. Down on the shores there might be shell-fish capable of nourishing life, but thither he dared not fare: he must remain, like a rat, within his hole; and help from the sea-birds there was none, for the puffins had all fled many weeks before, and the gulls were strong-winged and beyond his reach. Water he lacked not; the cold rocks distilled *that* liberally enough; but food he had none—nay, not even the dulse of the sea to gnaw. He was caged, trapped; and now he starved.

What wonder, then, if his face looked wild and despairing as he gazed out on the lonely sea? Far out in the moon, creeping like black water-snakes along the water, he saw the fishing boats going seaward: ah, how merrily had he sailed with them in those peaceful days that were gone! He had lost all that; he had lost the world. . . . Yet he

could bear all, he would not care, if he had only a crust of bread to eat !

Sometimes his head swooned round, for already hunger had begun to attack the citadels of life ; sometimes he fell away into a doze and awoke shivering ; yet, waking or asleep, he sat watching at the Cave's mouth in desolation and despair.

“ Rohan ! Rohan ! ”

He starts from his half-sleep, looking wildly round him. Almighty God ! is it a dream ? Something black stirs there in the moonlight ; something black, and amidst it something white. It is too dim for him to see well—to distinguish shapes—but he can hear the well-known voice, though it comes only in a whisper. Can it be real ?

“ Rohan ! Rohan ! ”

Yes, it is real ! Peering down he sees, floating under the Altar, a small boat containing two figures. Yes, surely a boat, by the movement of the muffled oars. It moves softly up and down in the great swell that rises and falls in the Cathedral.

"Rohan, are you there? Listen, it is I—Marcelle! Ah, now I see you—whisper low, for they are on the watch."

"Who is with you?"

"Jàn Goron; we crept along close to shore through the Porte d'Ingnal, and no one saw; but there is no time to lose. We have brought you food!"

The man's eyes glitter as he bends over the descent, looking down at the boat. As he hangs in this attitude, a sound strikes upon his ears, and he listens wildly; again! yes, it is the sound of oars beyond the Gate.

"Quick! begone!" he cries; "they are coming! . . . See! throw the food down on the shingle and fly!"

The tide is still nearly full, but just under the *Trou* there is a narrow space of shingle from which the water has just ebbed, and on which the boat's prow strikes at intervals. On this shingle Marcelle, leaning quickly forward, deposits what she bears; then, with an impulsive movement, she stretches her arms eagerly up to him who hangs above her, as if to embrace him, while Jàn

Goron, with a few swift strokes of the oars, forces the light boat across the Cathedral floor, through the Gate, and out to the sea beyond. Scarcely has he passed the shadow of the Gate, however, when a gruff voice demands, "Who goes there?" and a black pinnacle, rowed by sailors of the coast-guard, bears down from the darkness. In an instant a heavy hand is laid on the gunwale of Goron's boat; bayonets and cutlasses glisten in the dim moonlight, and a familiar voice cries—

"Tous les diables ! It is a woman !"

The speaker is Pipriac, and he stands in the stern of the pinnacle, glaring over at Marcelle.

"The lantern ! let us see her face !"

Some one lifts a lighted lantern from the bottom of the boat and flashes its rays right into the face of Marcelle. She is soon recognized; and then the same proceeding is gone through with Goron, whose identity is hailed with a volley of expletives.

"Is this treason?" cries Pipriac. "Malediction ! answer, one or both. What the foul

fiend are you doing out here by the Gate at such an hour? Do you know what will be the consequence if you are discovered aiding and abetting the deserter? Well, it will be death!—death, look you—even for you, Marcelle Derval, though you are only a girl and a child!”

Marcelle answers with determination, though her heart is sick with apprehension lest her errand is discovered—

“Surely one may row upon the water without offence, Sergeant Pipriac.”

“Ah, bah! tell that to the fishes; old Pipriac is not so stupid. Here, one of you, search the boat.”

A man leaps, lantern in hand, from the larger boat into the smaller, searches it, and finds nothing: at which Pipriac shakes his head and growls. It is characteristic of Pipriac that when he is least really angry he vociferates and objurgates the most; when most subdued he is most dangerous. On the present occasion his language is quite unquotable. When he has finished, one of the men inquires quietly if Marcelle

and Goron are to be arrested or suffered to go about their business.

“Curses upon them, let them go! but we must keep our eyes open henceforth. Jàn Goron, I suspect you—be warned, and take no more moonlight excursions. Marcelle, you too are warned; you come of a good stock, and I should be sorry to see you get into trouble. Now, away with you!—Home, like lightning! And, hark you, when next you come out here by night you will find it go hard with you indeed. Begone!”

So Marcelle and Goron go free—partly, perhaps, through the secret good-nature of the Sergeant. Goron pulls rapidly for the village, and soon his boat touches the shore immediately beneath the cottage of Mother Gwenfern.

Meantime Pipriac has peered through the Gate into the Cathedral; seeing all quiet and in darkness, he gives the order to depart, and so his boat, too, disappears from the scene. No sooner has the sound of his oars quite died away in the distance than a dark figure begins to descend from the Cave; hanging

by feet and hands to creep down from crevice to crevice of the dangerous wall, until it reaches the space of shingle beneath : there it finds the burthen which Marcelle brought, which it secures carefully before again climbing ; then, even more rapidly than it came down, it proceeds to re-ascend, and, ere long, in perfect safety, it returns to the mouth of the Cave. So Rohan Gwenfern is saved from famine for the time being.





CHAPTER XVIII.

A FOUR-FOOTED CHRISTIAN.

THE siege has lasted nearly a fortnight, and still the deserter seems as far off from surrendering as ever. It is inscrutable, inconceivable ; for every avenue of aid is now blocked, and there is no known means by which a human being could bring him help, either by land or sea. Save for the fact that from time to time glimpses are caught of his person, and indications given of his existence, one would imagine the deserter to be dead. Yet he is not dead ; and he does not offer to surrender ; and, indeed, he is tiresomely on the alert. Naturally, the patience of his pursuers is

exhausted ; but they do not neglect their usual precautions. Pipriac, in his secret mind (where he is superstitious), begins to think he is dealing with a ghost after all ; for surely no human being, single-handed, could so consummately and so calmly set at defiance all the forces of the law, of Pipriac, and of the great Emperor. Of one thing Pipriac is certain, that no human hand brings the deserter food ; and yet he lives ; and to live he must eat ! and how all the devils does he provide the wherewithal ? Unless he is mysteriously fed by an angel, or (which is far more probable in Pipriac's opinion) by a spirit of a darker order, he must himself be something more than human : in which case affairs look grim, and yet ridiculous indeed. Food does not—at least in these degenerate days—drop from heaven ; nor does it, in a form suitable for human sustenance, grow in rocks and caves of the sea. How then by all that is diabolic does the deserter procure that food which is so terrible and common-place a human necessity ? It puzzles thinking.

What the open-minded and irascible soldier,

too fair and too fiery for subtle suspicions, fails altogether to discover, is finally, after many nights and days, rooted out and brought to light by the mole-like burrower in mean soil, Mikel Grallon. Honest Mikel has been all this time, more or less, a hanger-on to the skirts of the besieging party: coming and going at irregular intervals, but never quite abandoning his functions as scout and spy in general. Him Pipriac ever regards with a malignant and baleful eye, but to Pipriac's dislike he is skin-proof. His business now is to ascertain by what secret means the deserter sets his enemies at defiance and cannot even be starved out of, or *in*, his citadel. Here Grallon, unlike the Sergeant, has no superstitions; he is convinced, with all his crafty mind, that there are sound physical reasons for all that is taking place: Rohan Gwenfern is receiving ordinary sustenance—but *how*?

It comes upon Grallon in one illuminating flash, as he stands, not far from Pipriac, at the foot of the Stairs of St. Triffine, looking upward. Westward, on the cliff's face, not

far from the Cathedral, something is moving, walking with sure footsteps on paths inaccessible to man : it pauses ever and anon, gazing round with quiet unconcern ; then it leisurely moves on ; nor does it halt until it has descended the green side in the very neighbourhood of Rohan's *Trou*. Great inspirations come suddenly ; to Grallon it seems "as if a star has burst within his brain." He runs up to Pipriac, who is sullenly sitting on a rock with a group of his men around him.

"Look, Sergeant, look !"

And he points at the object in the distance. Pipriac rolls his one eye round in no amiable fashion, and demands by all the devils what Mikel Grallon means.

"Look !" repeats Mikel. "The goat !"

"And what of the goat, fisherman ?"

"Only this : it is going to the *Trou*, and it goes there by day and night to feed its master : now at the cottage, then at the Cave. What fools we have been !"

Here Grallon chuckles silently, much to the anger of the Sergeant.

"Cease grimacing, and explain!" cries Pipriac. "Well?"

"I have my suspicions—nay, am I not certain?—that Madame Longbeard yonder is in the plot. Is she not ever wandering to and fro upon the cliffs, and will she not come to the deserter's call, and would it not be easy to conceal food about her body?—no matter how little; a crust will keep life alive. Look! she descends—she is out of sight; she is going straight down to the Cave!"

Pipriac keeps his live-coal of an eye fixed on Grallon's, looking through rather than upon him, in a grim abstraction; then he rises, growling, to his feet, and calls a consultation, the result of which is that the goat shall be strictly watched.

The morning after Jannedik is intercepted as she emerges on the cliff, surrounded, and "searched," but, nothing being discovered, she is suffered to go. The morning afterwards, however, Pipriac is more fortunate; for he finds, carefully buried among the long hair of the goat's throat, and suspended by

a strong cord round the neck—a small basket of woven reeds containing black bread and strong cheese. It is now clear enough that Jannedik has been the bearer of supplies from time to time.

“It would be only just,” says one of the *gendarmes*, “to shoot her for treason against the Emperor.”

Pipriac scowled.

“No, let her go,” he cried, “the beast knows no better;” and as Jannedik leapt away without the load, and began descending the cliffs in the direction of the Cathedral, he muttered, “She will not be so welcome to-day as usual, without her little present.”

So the *gendarmes* eat the bread and cheese, and laugh as they reflect that Rohan is circumvented at last; while Pipriac paces up and down, in no lamb-like mood, for he is secretly ashamed of the whole business. Still, duty is duty, and the Sergeant, with dogged pertinacity, means to perform his.

Henceforth all efforts to use Jannedik as the bearer of supplies are unavailing;—a *gendarme* is posted at the widow's door night

and day, with strict orders to watch the whole family, especially the goat. He notices that Jannedik seldom goes and comes at all, and never stays long out of doors ; for lying on the hearth within she has a little kid, who requires constant maternal attention. When one night, the kid dies and Jannedik is left lamenting, the *gendarme* regards the affair as of no importance ;—but he is wrong.

More days pass, and still the deserter is not dead but liveth. Wild winds blow with rain and hail, the sea roars night and day, the besiegers have a hard time of it and are growing furious. How the fierce rains lash the cliffs ! how the spindrift flies in from the foaming waters !—and yet screened from all this sits the deserter, while the servants of the Emperor are dripping like drowned rats. Hours of storm, when Pipriac's loudest malediction is faint as the scratch of a pin, unheeded and scarce heard ! Is this to last for ever ?

To Pipriac and the rest, pacing there in mist and cloud, peeping, muffled to the throat, there come from time to time tidings

from the far-off seat of war. The great Emperor has met with slight reverses, and some of his old friends are falling away from him; indeed, if Pipriac could only discern it, the cloud no bigger than a prophet's hand is already looming on the German Rhine. The *gendarmes* laugh and quote the bulletins as they tramp up and down. They are amused at the folly of those who have fallen off from the Emperor, and look forward for the news of French victory which is to come soon!

Once more, as they stand below the cliffs, Mikel Grallon points upward, calling the attention of Pipriac.

"Well?" snaps the Sergeant.

"That accursed goat; it goes to the *Trou* oftener than ever."

"What then? It goes empty, fisherman—we take care of that. Pshaw, you are an ass!"

Mikel trembles and quivers spitefully as he replies—

"I will tell you one thing that you have overlooked, clever as you think yourself; if

you had thought of it you would never have let the goat go."

"Well?"

"The goat is in full suck, though her kid is dead; and a mouth draws her milk each day!"

Pipriac utters an exclamation; here is a new light with a vengeance!

"Is this true?" he growls, glaring round. "Malediction! but this Mikel Grallon is the devil! After all, a man cannot live on the milk of a goat."

"It may suffice for a time," says Mikel Grallon; "there is life in it. Curses on the beast! If I were one of you, I would soon settle its business."

As he speaks the goat is passing overhead, at a distance of several hundred yards, leisurely pausing ever and anon, and cropping the thin herbage as she goes. A diabolical twinkle comes into the Sergeant's eye.

"Can you shoot, fisherman?" he asks.

"I can hit a mark," is the reply.

"I will wager a bottle of good brandy you could not hit a barn-door at a hundred

yards! Nevertheless—Hoël, give him your gun.”

The *gendarme* hands his weapon to Mikel Grallon, who takes it silently, with a look of interrogation at Pipriac.

“Now, fire!”

“At what?”

“Malediction! at the goat; let us see what you are made of. Fire,—and miss!”

The thin lips of Mikel Grallon are pressed tight together, and his brow comes down over his eyes. His hand does not tremble as, kneeling down on knee, he steadies the piece and takes aim. Up above him Jannedik, with her side presented full to him, pauses unconscious.

He is so long in taking aim that Pipriac swears.

“Malediction!—*fire!*”

There is a flash, a report, and the bullet flies on to its mark above. For a moment it appears to have missed, for the goat, though it seemed to start at the sound, still stands in the same position, scarcely stirring; and Hoël is snatching his gun back with a

contemptuous laugh, when Pipriac, pointing upward, cries—

“*Tous les diables !*—she is hit; she is coming down !”

But the niche where the goat stands is broad and safe, and she has only fallen forward on her knees; it is obvious she is hurt, for she quakes and seems about to roll over; restraining herself, however, she staggers to her legs, and then, as if partially recovered, she runs rapidly along the cliffs in the direction of the Cave.





CHAPTER XIX.

VIGIL.

FOR a second time Mikel Grallon, with the cunning of his class, had guessed correctly ; and for two long days and nights Rohan Gwenfern had received no other sustenance than the milk of the goat. At first, after the death of her kid, Jannedik had been running about the cliffs distracted, burthened with the weight of the milk the little lips could no longer draw ; and the famished man in the Cave, finding in her discomfort his bodily salvation, had in direst extremity put his mouth to her teeming udder and drunk. From that moment forth Jannedik returned many times a day to be

relieved of her painful burthen; and the more relief came the freer the milk flowed—a vital and an invigorating stream.

But by this time the struggle was well-nigh over, and Rohan Gwenfern knew well that the end was near. The hand of Death seemed upon him, the wholesome flesh had worn from off his bones, and his whole frame was shrunken and famine-stricken. No eye undimmed with tears could have seen him there, crouching like a starved wolf upon his dark bed, with wild eyes glaring out through hair unkempt, his cheeks sunken, his jaw drooping in exhaustion and despair. From time to time he wailed out to God inarticulate sounds of misery; and often his head grew light, and he saw strange visions flitting about him in the gloom. But always, when there came any sound from below, he was ready, with all his fierce instinct upon him, to watch and to resist.

He was sitting thus towards evening, while the tide was full and the waves were roaring in storm underneath the Cave, when the entrance was darkened, and Jannedik crept

in, and, passing across the damp and slimy floor, lay down at his bed. For a time he scarcely noticed her, for he was light-headed, muttering and murmuring to himself; but presently his attention was attracted by the rough tongue licking his hand. Turning his hollow eyes upon her, he murmured her name and touched her softly, at which she stirred, looking up into his face and uttering a low cry of pain; and then, quivering from head to foot in agony, she rolled over at his feet. He then saw, with horror, that she was suffering from a terrible wound in the side, some distance behind the shoulder; and from that wound her life's blood was ebbing fast.

Pitiful—even more pitiful than the pain of human beings whose lips can speak—are the fatal pangs of poor beasts that the good God made dumb. By an instinct diviner than our reason they know and fear the approach of death, and sometimes they seem to love life well—so well, they *dare* not die. Shall we weep by mortal death-beds and keep dry eyes by these? or shall we not rather deem that the Shadow that darkens *our* hearts is

terrible to theirs, and that the blessing we ask upon *our* last sleep should be spoken on theirs as well: with the same hope of awakening, with the same poor gleam of comfort, with the same faith born of despair in the presence of that great darkness we cannot understand?

To Rohan, this poor goat had been more than succour and solace: she had been a friend and a companion, almost human in the comfort she brought. So long as she came to him, with or without tidings from the world, he did not seem quite deserted, he did not feel quite heart-broken. Several times he had flung his arms around her neck, and almost wept, as he thought of the loving ones from whom she came; and her familiar presence, seen from day to day, had made the dark Cave seem like home.

And now she lay at his feet panting, dying, her large eyes upturned beseechingly to his. He uttered a wild groan, and knelt beside her.

“Jannedik! Jannedik!”

The poor beast knew her name and licked

the hand of her master ; then, with one last quiver of the bleeding frame, she dropped her gentle head, and died.

Darkness came, and found Rohan Gwenfern still kneeling by the side of his dead friend, his face white as death and lit with frenzy, his frame trembling from head to foot. All his own physical troubles were forgotten for the time, in this new surprise and pain ; he gazed on the dead goat as on a murdered man, innocent yet martyred ; and again and again he called his heart's curse on the hand that struck her low. A sick horror possessed him : he could not rise nor stir, but the wild thoughts coursed across his brain like clouds across the sky.

The moon rose in the high heavens, but the wind had not abated, and the sea was still thundering on the shore. It was one of those wild autumn nights when there is a great shining in the upper air, with a strange trouble and conflict of the forces below ; when the moon and stars fulfil their ministrations to an earth that trembles in

darkness and a sea that moans in pain; a night of elemental contradictions: vast calm in the heavens, but mighty tumult under the heavens; the clouds drifting luminously yet softly overhead, but the North-West Wind going forth tumultuously below, with his foot on the neck of the Deep.

The cold moonlight from heaven crept into the Cave and touched the dead goat, and trembled on Rohan's face and hands as if in benediction; but no benediction came; and the man's heart was fierce as a beast's within him, and the man's brain was mad. As a wild beast broods in its cave, gazing out through the lunar sheen with glazed and mindless eyes, Rohan crouched in his place in a sort of savage trance. One hour—two—passed thus. He seemed scarcely to see or hear.

Meanwhile the foaming, surging tide had drifted out through the Gate, and the tomb-like rocks and stones were again visible on the weedy, shingly shore. The sea roared farther off, beyond the Gate, but its roar was still deafening. The wind, moreover, was yet

rising, and there was a halo like Saturn's ring round the vitreous Moon.

All at once Rohan leapt to his feet and listened; for, above the roar of the sea and the shriek of the wind, he heard a startling sound. In a moment he sprang to the mouth of the Cave—and not too soon; for the Cathedral was full of men, and wild faces were moving up from beneath towards his hiding-place. Ladders had at last been procured and, lashed together, placed against the dripping Altar. Up these ladders men were clambering. But when Rohan appeared like a ghost above them in the moonlight, they shrank back with a loud cry.

Only for an instant; then they began to swarm up again.





CHAPTER XX.

VICTORY.

IT was the work of a moment for Rohan, exerting all his extraordinary strength, to hurl back the two ladders, the highest rungs of which rested against the foot of the *Trou*. Fortunately, those upon them had not climbed far, and fell backwards shrieking, but little harmed; while, urged to frenzy by the appearance of the besieging crowd, Rohan straightway commenced to hurl down upon the mass the ponderous fragments of rock which he had placed, ready for use, at the Cave's mouth. Shrieks, cries, oaths arose; and the men withdrew tumultuously

out of reach. Then a voice shrieked "Fire!" and a shower of bullets rained round the deserter's form ; but all missed their mark.

It was now quite clear that Pipriac, weary of so long waiting, had made up his martial mind to carry the position by storm. Under cover of the firing a number of *gendarmes* advanced again, and the ladders were once more placed against the dripping wall of the "Altar"; but in another moment the besiegers were again baffled and driven back by terrible showers of rocks and stones. More like a wild beast than a human creature, Rohan flitted above in the dark mouth of the Cave : silently, with mad out-reaching arms, gathering and discharging his rude ammunition ; gazing hungrily and fiercely down on the cruel faces congregated below him ; taking no more heed of the bullets pouring around him than he might have done of falling rain or hail. In their excitement and fury the men aimed wildly and at random ; so that, although his body was a constant target for their bullets, the deserter remained unharmed.

Presently, discovering all attempts to be unavailing, the *gendarmes* withdrew out of reach in eager consultation. Behind them, filling the aperture of the Gate, gathered villagers of both sexes, from whose lips from time to time came low cries of terror and amaze.

Finding the position his own and his security no longer assailed, Rohan withdrew back into the Cave.

But the patience of the besiegers had been long exhausted, and the suspension of attack was not destined to last long. Now that they possessed scaling ladders and other implements of attack ready to their hand, they were determined, at any risk, to unearth the creature who had resisted them so calmly for so prolonged a period. Dead or alive, they would secure him; and that night. The storm which was raging all around did not interfere with their manœuvres; on the contrary, it facilitated them; and from time to time, when the moon was veiled under the clouds and all was

darkness and confusion, the assault seemed easy.

Under cover of a sharp fire of bullets given by a file of *gendarmes* told off for that purpose, a number of men again advanced to the attack. Lying flat on his face, Rohan kept himself well concealed behind the heap of rocks and stones which he had accumulated at the mouth of the Cave ; so that, although he presented no mark for the bullets, his arms were ready to precipitate his heavy missiles on those below. So soon as the advance was made, and the ladders were rested against the face of the cliff, the defence began anew.

Showers of rocks, great and small, rolled down from the *Trou*. Had some of the larger missiles struck their mark the result would speedily have been fatal ; but the besiegers were wary, and by their rapid movements escaped much of Rohan's point-blank fire. From time to time, indeed, there was a yell of fury when a stray stone struck home and caused some furious besieger to limp or crawl back to his comrades in the

safe part of the Cathedral; but as yet no man was dangerously hurt, and ere long the ladders were again safely placed against the cliff, and men began rapidly to ascend. It was now that Rohan, springing erect and holding high in the air a huge fragment of rock, dashed it down with incredible force and fury on one of the ladders. Fortunately, no human being had reached the point where the rock struck; but the rungs of the ladder snapped like dry faggots, and amid a yell of execration, the entire ladder itself collapsed, and those who were climbing fell back heavily, bleeding and half stunned.

"Fire! fire!" shrieked Pipriac, pointing at the figure of Rohan, which was now distinctly visible above him in the moonlight. Before the command could be obeyed Rohan had crouched down under shelter, and the bullets rained harmlessly round the spot where he had just stood.

"Devil! deserter! *chouan!*" yelled the infuriated Sergeant, shaking his fist impotently at the *Trou*. "We will have you alive or dead!"—and turning again to his

men, he cried, "Forward again! to the attack!"

Again the body of men moved forward under cover of fire, and again the extraordinary contest was renewed.

It was a scene to be remembered. The dark masses moving and crying in the Cathedral, with glistening of bayonets and flashing of guns; the wild astonished groups of villagers congregated at the Gate, far without which the sea was roaring and gleaming in furious storm; the great black cliffs above, reaching up as it were into the very heaven, and ever and again gleaming like sheet-lightning under the sudden illumination of the moon; and high up above the Cathedral floor the lonely Cave, with the wild figure of a man coming and going across it like a ghost. To the cannonade of wind and sea, before which the mighty crags seemed to shake to their foundations, there was added the sharp sound of the muskets and the hoarse roaring from the throats of men; but at intervals, when all sounds ceased for an instant, both the roar of the elements

and the disturbing cries of mortals, the stillness was deathlike though momentary, and you could distinctly hear the cry of some disturbed sea-bird far up among the crags.

The conflict grew tumultuous. As a succession of huge clouds came up obscuring the moon for many minutes together, there was frequently almost total darkness.

Only the extraordinary impregnability of Rohan's position prevented it from being carried twenty times over; for as the time flew, and the attack continued unabated, the man's strength began to fail him. Hours passed, and he still succeeded in keeping his enemies at bay; but his hands were bleeding from the sharp rocks, his head seemed whirling round, his eyes were blinded with fatigue, and he heard rather than saw the crowd that raged and climbed beneath his feet. For, remember, he was spent with hunger, worn with long watching and waiting, and he possessed only a tithe of his old gigantic strength,

Again and again the besiegers were repulsed; more than one was wounded and

had crept away; but the shower of rocks continued terrific whenever they approached again. Over all the other tumult rose the voice of Pipriac urging on his men.

Had the *gendarmes* been marksmen Rohan would have fallen early in the fight; but partly from want of skill, and partly from excessive excitement, they fired at random, until their ammunition was almost spent.

Many hours had passed away when the besiegers made a final attack, more desperate than any that had taken place before. Advancing under cover of darkness, they set their ladder against the cliff, while their comrades covered the mouth of the Cave with their guns. In a moment Rohan had sprung up again, and had hurled back the ladder with tremendous strength. There was a flash—a roar—and once more the bullets rained round him. He drew back startled, and before he could recover himself the assault was renewed.

Simultaneously with the central attack two *gendarmes*, taking off their shoes and holding their bayonets between their teeth, began,

completely unseen and unsuspected, to make their way upward by the fissures in the rock at the side of the "Altar." Rohan had twice again hurled back the ladder, and was in the act of discharging a fresh volley of stones, when he was startled by the apparition of two human faces rising at his feet and glaring upward. A wild exclamation burst from his lips, and, stooping down, he loosened from the rock at his feet two convulsive human hands.

With a shrill cry, the man fell backward into the crowd below; fortunately, his fall was broken by the moving, heaving mass, and although he was half stunned, and half stunned several others, he was not killed. Meantime his companion, fearful of meeting the same fate, had rapidly descended.

But in the mean time the ladder was again fixed and held firmly down against the cliff, while more men were rapidly climbing. By this time Rohan was well-nigh exhausted and yielding rapidly to a species of vertigo. He no longer saw his enemies; but, seizing rock after rock, hurled them down furiously

into the darkness! Suddenly, however, he became conscious of dark figures rising to him from below. His head swam round. Uplifting with all his strength a gigantic fragment of rock, almost the last remaining of his store, he poised it for one moment over his head, and then, with a wild cry, hurled it downward at the shapes he saw approaching! There was a crash, a shriek; under the frightful weight of the rock the ladder yielded, and the figures upon it shrank groaning down; horrible cries followed, of agony and terror;—and then, overcome by his excitement and fatigue, Rohan swooned away.

How long he lay unconscious he could not tell; but when he opened his eyes he was lying unmolested in the mouth of the Cave. The wind was still crying and the sea was still roaring, but all other sounds were silent; and when, remembering his recent peril, and half expecting to find himself face to face with his enemies, he started up and gazed around him, he saw no sign

of any human being. The moon was out without a cloud, her beams were flooding the Cathedral of St. Gildas; and lo! the foaming tide had entered the Gate and was rapidly creeping nearer and nearer to the great Altar. The silence was now explained. The besiegers had withdrawn, as before, at the tide's approach, and left him master of the situation.

Peering over into the gloom he saw the shingle below thickly strewn with huge rocks and stones, the *débris* of the recent struggle, but of any lingering human being there was no sign. Indeed, for any one remaining in the Cathedral, and lacking the skill or power to ascend to the Cave, there would only have been one doom—a swift death in the cruel, crawling tide. Inch by inch, foot by foot, the stormy waters were coming in, and already the great Cathedral floor was half paved with the liquid, shimmering pools.

Well, the battle was over, and he had conquered; and, indeed, properly provisioned for the purpose, and duly recovered from the

effects of his long privation, he could have held the position for an indefinite period against hundreds of men. But now, alas ! all his force had gone from him. Hunger and cold had done their work, and the last citadel of his bodily strength seemed overcome. Trembling and shivering he looked around him, conscious of no feeling save a sense of utter desolation and despair. He had held out bravely, but he knew that he could hold out no longer ; he was safe for a little space, but he knew that his persecutors would soon return ; and altogether both man and God seemed against him, as he had feared and believed from the beginning.

The Gate of the Cathedral was now full of the boiling, rushing, whirling waves, and the floor was more than two-thirds covered. A roar like thunder was in the air, and the salt flakes of foam were blown by the wind up into his very face. As he stooped again, gazing down, he beheld for the first time, right under him in the moonlight, something which riveted his attention, something dark and moveless, extended on the shingle

immediately below the Cave, and towards which the tide was rapidly rushing, with white lips ready to touch and tear!

He gazed on for some moments in silent fascination, with his heart quite cold and sick with dread; then, eager to satisfy a wild curiosity, he prepared to descend the face of the cliff.

END OF VOL. II.



